

HORACE WALPOLE'S  
WORLD

ALICE D. GREENWOOD



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HORACE WALPOLE'S WORLD

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*Emory Walker Del. sc*

*Horace Walpole  
from a pastel by Rosalba  
in the possession of Lady Dorothy Nevill*

# HORACE WALPOLE'S WORLD

A SKETCH OF WHIG SOCIETY  
UNDER GEORGE III

BY  
ALICE DRAYTON GREENWOOD



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## PREFACE

**I**T is a frequent grievance with the old inhabitant who has watched his village develop into a town, or his town into a cosmopolitan junction, that there is no Society now. When he was young everybody knew everyone; he sat upon committees beside the men whom he sat by at dinner, the wives and children of colleagues or rivals were the companions of his own, work and pleasure had been harmonious in a society which, however various its ostensible interests, was essentially a unity.

With something of this sentiment does the twentieth century regard the eighteenth and the homogeneous social system of its upper classes. Soldier or politician, churchman or man of fashion, all seemed to have lived upon one plane, in one atmosphere. It was circumscribed in view, apt to bestow the scorn of ignorance upon those beyond its pale, but within its own bounds it was united and inexorable: its standards and conventions exhibit an effect something like the impact of a

regiment. It was a brilliant society; a man was expected to adorn more than one position in life, and frequently did so with an ease apt to convey to the anxious denizen of a world of specialization an erroneous impression of amateurishness.

Through this active, opulent Society strolled the acute and amiable Horace Walpole, catching the manners living as they rose, but unaware of any antagonism between candour and laughter. The long row of his letterbooks offers a perspective gallery of portraiture, or rather opens a series of windows upon the brilliant and various scene of eighteenth-century England, from the 'Forty-five to the French Revolution War. He may perhaps interpret to us something of the ideas and system of that half-century of the great Whig dominion in England, for he grew up in the hey-day of its glory and lived to witness its decay. Certainly he regarded himself as its orthodox exponent, as, after all, was but natural in the son of Sir Robert Walpole.

The writer of the following pages can only ask forbearance from the familiars of "Horry" for her inadequate effort to interpret him and his world in brief. She would like also to express a grateful recognition of Mrs. Paget Toynbee's magnificent edition of Horace Walpole's "Letters."

## PREFACE

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The publishers, as well as the author, wish to avail themselves of this opportunity of thanking Mr. Ralph Nevill for permission to reproduce the extremely interesting and hitherto unpublished portrait of Walpole in early manhood, the property of the late Lady Dorothy Nevill.

A. D. G.

OXFORD,

*March 1913.*



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# HORACE WALPOLE'S WORLD

## I

### MR. HORACE WALPOLE

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THE middle of the eighteenth century found the kingdom of Great Britain enjoying a period of such profound tranquillity as would have rejoiced the ghost of Sir Robert Walpole. The war had ceased with the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. Stolid old George II seemed good for many more years of inertia. In Parliament the strife of factions had died away; Jacobitism was extinct and Toryism invisible; all the world was Whig, and the Whig aristocracy, opulent and Olympian, had no motive for disturbing the equilibrium of Pelham's "*golden age*" ministry. Even the death of the Prince of Wales scarce stirred a ripple, for the opposition which had centred round him had already dissolved, and its principal figure, Mr. Pitt, was devoting himself to the care of his health, to building a house at Bath, and to getting married. "In the memory of England there never was so inanimate a time. It is more fashionable to go to church than to either House of Parliament," grumbled Horace Walpole, youngest son of the late famous minister.

To this well-to-do, clever young man the conditions which blessed the commercial world gave only cause for repining. No openings offered to the ambitious, no scenes of interest to the observer; with "no war, no politics, no madness, no scandal," as he dolefully complains, "there never was so dull a place as London is, and so insipid an inhabitant of it as" himself.

Not that Mr. Walpole was at all in the habit of feeling bored (the word had not as yet enriched our vocabulary). He had early in life been endowed by his father with sinecure places sufficient to provide amply for comfort without supporting folly, his acquaintance embraced the better part of society, and various literary and artistic hobbies provided him with an endless stock of interests. His position, income, tastes, and delicate constitution permitted him to ignore inducements to embark upon any active career. He devoted considerable care to preserving himself in good health and living within his means, with a persistence almost heroic in those days of port wine and extravagance, and he cultivated throughout his long life the art of being happy. If he always played the part of a looker-on, it was one for which he was peculiarly fitted, since there was nobody more familiar than he with the intricacies of those personal ties which formed not only the basis of society but the major portion of politics during the greatest part of the eighteenth century.

That Society was not yet too large to be homogeneous, and there was a pretty general agreement

as to what was due to it. Wealth, of course, was taken for granted, and so was a sound classical education, entailing thorough study in boyhood, which frequently led to real scholarship and made a cultivated taste almost universal. Fine dress and fine manners were required, a superiority to sordid cares and to the appearance of business, a current acquaintance with everyone's affairs, constant urbanity, readiness to squander money over games of chance at any invitation, and to jest and chatter wittily in any circumstances: and with all this had to be combined a considerable familiarity with the machinery of Parliament or of the army, neither of which then provided a complete profession, though one or other of them almost every man of position would reckon among his occupations.

It would be doing some injustice to the contemporaries of George III, and particularly to Horace Walpole, to suppose that the almost invariable *insouciance* of their letters and conversation represents a permanent temper. It was not considered good manners to obtrude serious views; the impatience of the Methodists generally expressed by the polite world was due to their introduction of religious topics and phraseology amid inconsistent scenes and conversation; it shocked good taste to insist, to preach, to prose, to advertise anything or anyone in any way. Egotism itself would proceed, not by assertion, but by allusion, assumption, and jest, for the sin of sins was dullness.

The sphere of political life in the eighteenth century was hardly other than one aspect of society, that lofty society which lived in London for the better part of the year and regarded the rest of the kingdom as a spacious setting for its country palaces.

It had long been recognized as a law of nature that the magnates whose ancestors had placed William III on the throne of the Stewarts had inherited the right of directing the destinies of their country, and, with the native talent for organization, they had done so on a method which had produced a modernized feudal system. Borough seats became the property of the nobles, even county elections it was possible to influence. The House of Commons, then, consisted of small groups of members; there were the members who "belonged to the Duke of Cumberland," "the Princess's people," "Lord Cobham's young men," "the Scotch," the Duke of Bedford's or the Duke of Devonshire's members, the Grenvilles, the Townshends, etc.

From boyhood, a member of one of the great governing families breathed the atmosphere of family traditions and acquired instinctively the political, as he did the social, habits of the class in which he was born. Father, brothers, cousins, connections, formed a close group whose members spoke and voted in concert, much as they dined with, or quarrelled with, some family of equal pretensions in their county. Such a coterie provided a far closer and more determined party-



nucleus than the vaguer congeries indicated by the old names Whig or Tory. And a sentiment of common pride operated as strongly as self-interest to bind together in political action those who were already linked in personal concerns.

Thus it was considered both natural and creditable in Charles Fox, whose parents had made a run-away match, to be through life a fierce opponent of Acts of Parliament intended to reform the scandals of Fleet marriages, or check the abductions of young girls; and it was equally a matter of course, that when the Duke of Bedford opposed the bill for the new Paddington highway—because it would be so disagreeable a sight from the back windows of his palace—the Duke of Grafton should prove a keen supporter of the new public road.

Fortunately for Horace Walpole his position in the arena of politics was exactly suited to his temperament. He had been too youthful during his father's last years of power to become identified with any particular policy, yet, as his elder brothers eschewed public life, it was Horace who was accredited with the prestige due to his name. His principal friends were of the non-committal type; his first cousin, Henry Conway, alone among his intimate friends, was ambitious of a parliamentary career, and Conway was not a man of decided views, but amiably ready to hold important office under a succession of Prime Ministers. He and his elder brother, the Marquis of Hertford, belonged to the most aristocratic, exclusive and honourable, the least sordid but the least forcible of the political

groups of the day, to the group which, during the reign of George III, arrogated to itself the exclusive title of *the Whigs*. It was led by the racing Marquis of Rockingham, a somewhat colourless person in politics but considerably influenced by his private secretary Mr. Burke, much as the Marquis's rival, the Duke of Bedford, depended upon his political secretary Mr. Rigby. To the Rockingham party belonged a company of highly respectable dukes, they of Devonshire, Portland, Richmond, and Rutland, besides such Cavendishes and Mannerses, Conways and Keppels as considered it their duty to grace the Lower House with an occasional speech. They are in these days remembered chiefly for the splendid name of Burke, but their great asset then was the popular Marquis of Granby, the hero of Minden, whose name may still be found on the signboard of many an old inn. It was among "the Rockinghams" that Mr. Horace Walpole sat and watched the parliamentary game.

The entertainment was intellectual: debate was regarded as the principal purpose for which the House of Commons existed, and the audience became almost as critical as Athenians. To listen to brilliant speakers scoring neat points against each other, pouring out brisk retort and fierce invective, sailing near the wind and skilfully recovering, was sheer delight. No convictions, no feelings and few interests of any importance were hazarded. National business there was none, for nobody as yet dreamed of introducing innovation into the legal or social conditions of the country, though

the extremes of wealth and poverty were to be observed side by side in a contrast never before so sharp, and heightened only in the latter half of the same century. Some scores of highway or enclosure Bills, an Act to send the assizes from Aylesbury to Buckingham, for the convenience of Lord Temple, or perhaps the divorce Act of a peer, represented the business of Parliament.

Thus, in 1754, it looked as if with political faction was extinguished political life itself, and Horace Walpole reckoned it an additional grievance against Henry Pelham, whom he chose to detest as his father's ungrateful *protégé* and political heir. For it was Pelham's skill which had convinced the various personal interests which swayed the Houses of Parliament that they could expect no profit save from himself.

Suddenly the political world was struck aghast by the premature death of the minister. "Now I shall have no more peace," grumbled old George II, and Walpole corroborates the forecast. "He could not have died at a more critical time: all the elections were settled, all bargains made and much money advanced." He sarcastically hints that the oligarchy were already becoming doubtful of the advantages of unanimity, finding that "it lowered their prices to have but one purchaser," for "though there never was so little party, nor so little to be made by a seat in Parliament, either with regard to profit or fame, there never was such established bribery, or so profuse." Government had been reduced to the business of purchasing a sufficient

number of votes to maintain the Minister and his friends securely in their places.

At first Pelham's death merely placed his far less able elder brother, the Duke of Newcastle, in control of his system. How mortifying it must be, laughs Walpole, to discover that after all Pelham had not been indispensable, but that "it was the calm and the Government that carried on themselves!" "Duke Trinculo" took care to put the effective orators in whatever places they demanded, and, on confirming the bargains already made by his brother, had no opposition to dread. His own inanities, therefore, were of no account.

"On Friday," writes Walpole,<sup>1</sup> "this august remnant of the Pelhams went to court for the first time. At the foot of the stairs he cried and sunk down: the yeomen of the guard were forced to drag him up under the arms. When the closet door opened, he flung himself at his length at the King's feet, sobbed, and cried, 'God bless your Majesty! God preserve your Majesty!' and lay there howling and embracing the King's knees, with one foot so extended, that my Lord Coventry, who was *luckily* in waiting, and begged the standers-by to retire, with—'For God's sake, gentlemen, don't look at a great man in distress,' endeavouring to shut the door, caught his Grace's foot, and made him roar out with pain."

Laughing at the Duke of Newcastle did not con-

<sup>1</sup> No. 387 in Mrs. Toynbee's edition of Horace Walpole's Letters.

sole Walpole for the monotony of politics, "proceeding like farmers, regulating themselves by the almanac"; even the little tiff of war with France, he complained, had gone out of fashion and adjourned to America; he was gravely disappointed with a world where "everything had done happening."

Evidently, then, well-informed society was not prepared for the successive shocks which were to startle it, and the rest of the nation, out of their humdrum tranquillity. The overture of war declined, after all, to be relegated to America, and the outburst of the Seven Years' War brought down in rapid collapse Newcastle's ministerial house of cards and forced to the front the genius of Pitt.

For four years the terrific energy of that great Minister worked miracles in every department of administration, and Walpole, like all his fellow countrymen, was roused to enthusiasm: "Our bells are worn threadbare with ringing for victories," he tells Montagu, and quotes a saying that "it will soon be as shameful to beat a Frenchman as to beat a woman. Indeed, one is forced to ask every morning what victory there is, for fear of missing one." "The King . . . told the City of London that all was owing to *unanimity*, but I think he should have said, to *unmanimity*, for it were shameful to ascribe our brilliancy to anything but Mr. Pitt."

In the midst of the excitement, however, the old King died, and young George III proceeded forthwith on such a revolutionary system that for a decade all was confusion in the Government.

What with the great war abroad and the extraordinary political manœuvres which succeeded it at home, Horace Walpole certainly found excitements enough to fill his mind and his correspondence.

When the Seven Years' War began he was a cheerful, irresponsible young man of thirty-nine. Its close, in 1763, left him, as it were, harking towards middle age, beginning to experience disillusionment, and also gout, and entering on some unpleasant responsibilities and controversies. He had enjoyed a prolonged youth.

Politics, nevertheless, did not occupy the major part of Walpole's attention. He was too wise and too versatile for that. His was no simple character, to be summed up in an epithet—"malicious" or "effeminate." His acute mind, stored with the historical and literary parallels obvious to a man of culture, could hardly contemplate the corruption of public affairs in his own times save with indignation or with a humorous contempt. An incomparably greater mind than his, that of Pitt, expended its *sæva indignatio* upon the age almost in vain and suffered calamitous shipwreck among its shoals and shallows. Walpole chose the easier path of amused aloofness. His happiness depended upon his power of remaining a spectator of life and dwelling upon its more pleasing aspects—"to live in a vision as much as I can." He expended the activity of his intellect upon impersonal subjects—literature, the fine arts, antiquities, and the human affections of his warm heart upon a choice com-



pany of friends, for the most part gathered in enthusiastic youth and grappled to his soul till death—or a quarrel, for which, indeed, he was not invariably to blame.

They were almost all fellow Etonians: George Montagu, John Chute, Thomas Gray, Richard West, George Selwyn, and Henry Conway formed with Walpole a company of ardent friends, and with several of them he kept up a practically life-long correspondence.

After Eton Walpole had proceeded to Cambridge, as did Gray, by whom, either then or later, he was introduced to William Mason the poet, and became the warm friend and eager correspondent of the latter for many years until, in old age, they broke over politics.

Cambridge counted for much less than Eton in Horace Walpole's career, not unnaturally, since the Universities were then perhaps at their lowest repute, and to keep a lad of quality for three uninterrupted years at Cambridge was considered a really disgraceful neglect of his education. In the eighteenth century the foreign tour which followed upon the University course was the young gentleman's real introduction to life.

Horace Walpole was duly despatched to France and Italy, in company with Gray, on a "finishing" tour which occupied nearly three years. That in the middle of this period the two fell out is hardly surprising, considering their diverse characters. The reticent, super-sensitive, Christian-tempered young poet was incongruously placed as com-

panion to the volatile, self-confident, perhaps rather self-satisfied, and essentially irreligious son of the First Minister. But as the quarrel was in a few years' time made up, and terms of friendship, even of confidence, prevailed until Gray's death, too much stress ought not to be laid on the temporary estrangement.

His long sojourn in Florence was Walpole's epoch: he not only obtained there a thorough introduction to the manners and modes of Society and of the Fine Arts, his skill wherein procured for him, in his own time, so high a reputation, but he there formed the attachments which were to be the mainstay of his life-long contentment. John Chute, apparently, and Horace Mann, certainly, he had already known in boyhood. The Manns were distantly related to the Walpoles,<sup>1</sup> and Sir Robert Walpole had given a diplomatic appointment to young Horace Mann, who spent the rest of his life in Florence as agent and envoy at the arch-ducal court. The place suited him so well that he refused so much as to pay a visit to England, and after 1741 he and his namesake never met again. Walpole was a resident in Mann's house in Florence for over a year, and John Chute, then also upon the Grand Tour, made the third in their close friendship.

The long and famous correspondence carried on by the two Horaces—in spite of the fact that, as Walpole ruefully put it, they could have no more

<sup>1</sup> So Horace Walpole says. Horace and Galfridus were both Walpole names.

real familiarity "than the 'Daily Advertiser' would have if it wrote to the 'Florentine Gazette'"—makes Horace Mann the best known of Walpole's friends, but it may be questioned whether he did not feel a still deeper affection for Mann's brother Galfridus. He, and the rest of the Mann family, lived in England, engaged in a profitable business as army clothiers. To connection with the Walpole family was no doubt owing the appointment of a third brother as deputy to Edward and Horace Walpole in their rich custom-house place.

Galfridus Mann was a gentle soul over whom Horace Walpole longed to extend a protective care. He took infinite pains to soothe his friend's long, desponding illness, and for his sake tolerated the half insane provocations of the poor fellow's termagant wife, "his Tisiphone." Galfridus died in 1756, and seven years later Horace Walpole is still cherishing with tenderness his memory, "which is as dear to me as the first moment I lost him. He was the most sincere and affectionate friend that ever man had, and could I forget him on his account I never could on my own." "Dear Gal's children" experienced his constant kindness, and to obviate a threatened misunderstanding between the son and his uncle Sir Horace Mann, Walpole exerted all his arts of tactful persuasion and delicate intervention among the various Manns until he succeeded in establishing harmony.

John Chute does not figure in the correspondence so largely, for he was evidently little of a letter-writer, and moreover he lived a good deal

with Walpole. At Strawberry Hill he had a special parlour, sacred to his own papers and drawings, for the two had very similar tastes. "If I were to say all I think," writes Walpole, in an early letter to Mann, "of Mr. Chute's immense honesty, his sense, his wit, his knowledge and his humanity, you would think I was writing a dedication." A coldness between Mann and Chute, due, seemingly, to some negligence on the part of the latter, cost Walpole great concern, nor did he rest until, after repeated representations made first to one and then to the other, he succeeded in reconciling them.

When at last he lost Chute's companionship, his outpouring of grief to their common friend indicates that, until his sixtieth year, this friend had been to him something more than other friends.

"Mr. Chute<sup>1</sup> and I agreed invariably in our principles; he was my counsel in my affairs, was my oracle in taste, the standard to whom I submitted my trifles, and the genius that presided over poor Strawberry! His sense decided me in everything; his wit and quickness illuminated everything. I saw him oftener than any man; to him in every difficulty I had recourse, and him I loved to have here, as our friendship was so entire, and we knew one another so entirely, that he alone was never the least constraint to me. We passed many hours together without saying a syllable to each other; for we were both without ceremony. I left him without excusing myself, read or wrote before him, as if he were not present." Thus Horace Walpole

<sup>1</sup> No. 1700.

describes the loss he suffered in his friend's death, in 1776 when Walpole was nearly sixty.

"Alas! Alas! and how *self* presides even in our grief," he cries. "I am lamenting myself, not him!—no, I am lamenting my other self. Half is gone; the other remains solitary. . . . I shall only seem to be staying behind one that is set out a little before me."

Chute evidently had a hot temper, which, however "proceeded from his vast sense." "He saw everything so clearly and immediately, that he could not bear a momentary contradiction from folly or defective reasoning," but would burst out in expressions of sudden contempt. Even Walpole could not venture on talking politics with him, though the two were in complete agreement, because he could never be zealous enough, he says, to satisfy Mr. Chute.

Very different in temperament from Chute and Walpole was their friend George Montagu, with his odd phrases, his love of cards, his sarcasms, his obstinacy, and his devotion to country life. He was, however, the affectionate intimate of both until, when he and Walpole were grown old men, their friendship suddenly terminated, as usual, on the score of politics. Walpole begged "dear George" to term him "Horry," as in school days, poured out to him with little restraint the gossip of town, the news of their friends, and his own feelings and fancies; he executed his commissions—or remonstrated at their absurdity, and went to stay with him at Greatworth with more

pleasure than he usually found in paying visits. George Montagu "is extremely well housed,"<sup>1</sup> he tells Chute (in 1753) "after having roamed like a Tartar about the country with his whole personal estate at his heels. There is an extensive view, which is called pretty; but Northamptonshire is no country to please me. What entertained me was, that he who in London was grown an absolute recluse, is over head and ears in neighbours, and as popular as if he intended to stand for the county, instead of having given up the town. The very first morning after my arrival, as we were getting into the chaise to go to Wroxton, they notified a Sir Harry Danvers, a young squire, booted and spurred, and buck-skin-breeched. 'Will you drink any chocolate?'—'No; a little wine and water, if you please.'—I suspected nothing but that he had rode till he was dry. 'Niccolò, get some wine and water.' He desired the water might be warm—I began to stare; Montagu understood the dialect and ordered a negus. I had great difficulty to keep my countenance, and still more when I saw the baronet finish a very large jug indeed. To be sure, he wondered as much at me who did not finish a jug; and I could not help reflecting, that living always in the world makes one as unfit for living out of it, as always living out of it does for living in it."

Montagu had to choose another day to convey his friend to Wroxton, the home of Lord Guildford, who had "made George Montagu so absolutely

<sup>1</sup> No. 373.



viceroy over it that we saw it more agreeably than you can conceive; roamed over the whole house, found every door open, saw not a creature, had an extreme good dinner, wine, fruit, coffee and tea in the library, were served by fairies, tumbled over the books, said one or two talismanic words, and the cascade played, and went home loaded with pineapples and flowers. You will take me for Monsieur de Coulanges,<sup>1</sup> I describe eatables so feelingly; but the manner in which we were served made the whole delicious."

Walpole had a nervous dislike of being seen while he went over other people's houses and gardens, a pastime in which he found extreme pleasure.

A fortnight later he was sending Montagu maps of Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire, having felt the want of them while staying at Greatworth, and adds:

"I am ashamed to tell you that I laughed half an hour yesterday at the sudden death of your new friend Sir Henry Danvers, *after a morning's airing*, the news call it; I suspect it was a negus." On receiving Montagu's account of the occurrence, however, he begs his pardon for laughing "about your baronet's death; but his *wine and water a little warm* had left such a ridiculous impression upon me, that even his death could not efface it."

"Horry" was for ever wheedling George Montagu to come to town: "You *will* live in the country, and then you are amazed that people use you ill."

<sup>1</sup> See Madame de Sévigné's Letters.

When at length Montagu was seduced into politics, and in 1767 deserted his country squire-dom to become secretary to Lord North (son of his cousin Lord Guildford), Walpole was rejoiced, until the transformation of Lord North from a member of the Chatham-Grafton cabinet into the Premier of the King's Friends, in 1770, entailed a similar perversion of principle, as Walpole considered it, in Montagu. Though Walpole and North respected each other personally, the Whiggish and "republican" sentiments of the former were too strongly pronounced for Montagu to be able to hope that his adhesion to "the King's Friends" could be received with equanimity, and as both men had become, by that time, touchy and sarcastic, the coldness which ensued was absolute.

"He had dropped me,"<sup>1</sup> wrote Walpole regretfully, "partly from politics and partly from caprice, for we never had any quarrel—but he was grown an excessive humourist and had shed almost all his friends as well as me. He had parts, and infinite vivacity and originality until of late years—and it grieved me much that he had changed towards me, after a friendship of between thirty and forty years." It is in his letters to Chute and Montagu that Walpole was most openly himself. To them he habitually writes without caveats or caution.

There remains of the little band of Etonians Henry Seymour Conway, Walpole's cousin, who exchanged with him a correspondence of fifty-five years. In "Horry's" eyes his friends always

<sup>1</sup> No. 2046.



wore the garments of perfection with which his young admiration had indued them. Just as Mann is always an incarnation of sagacity and generosity, so the commonplace and irresolute Conway is always the ideal soldier, and a statesman to boot, of eminent talents and superb integrity. "All my life," writes Walpole, when nearing sixty, "I have satisfied myself with your being perfect instead of trying to be so myself."

No doubt General Conway—he attained that grade by carpet promotion—was a man of very respectable honesty and sincerity, two qualities certainly not frequently to be found in the House of Commons, but his eminent talent, in the eyes of others, lay in his being the brother of the Marquis of Hertford, and, perhaps, in a possible capacity for being utilized as a competitor of the Marquis of Granby.

Walpole found it a grave blot on the character of Pitt to be insensible—doubtless from jealousy, he insinuates—of the merits of Conway, whose modest acquiescence, when second in command, in his superior's precipitate retreat from Rochefort (in 1757) had not reflected credit on him in the eyes of military men. Among the censurers was General Wolfe: and when the tidings of Quebec arrived in 1759, Walpole cries—"Wolfe,<sup>1</sup> as I am convinced, has fallen a sacrifice to his rash blame of you. If I understand anything in the world, his letter that came on Sunday said this: 'Quebec is impregnable; it is flinging away the lives of brave men to at-

<sup>1</sup> No. 656.

tempt it. I am in the situation of Conway at Rochefort; but having blamed him, I must do what I now see he was in the right to see was wrong, and yet what he would have done; and as I am commander, which he was not, I have the melancholy power of doing what he was prevented doing.' Poor man! his life has paid the price of his injustice; and as his death has purchased such benefit to his country, I lament him, as I am sure you, who have twenty times more courage and good-nature than I have, do too."

Conway's inherent weakness could not be more generously transfigured.

Unhappily this perfect soldier severely wounded the self-esteem of his apologist, when, during his tenure of a secretaryship of state, he not only ignored a personal request from Walpole, but passed him over as a man of no political account. Conway himself may have been, possibly, unaware of the grievance he had occasioned, and the correspondence continued to the last with apparently unabated warmth, though Walpole felt sufficient resentment to leave his feelings on record in his *Memoirs*. Conway was evidently unable to idealize his cousin Horace, although he trusted almost implicitly to his advice in matters political, a circumstance which invested Horry with a certain political importance.

Besides these intimate old friends, and a small number of friendly acquaintance gathered in the pursuit of literary or antiquarian knowledge—men such as Mason, West, Cole, Thomas Ashton

(fellow Etonians), Richard Bentley, Pinkerton, or the artistic Earl Harcourt, Walpole cultivated a considerable number of women friends. These, too, seem almost too good to be true; they all are perfectly beautiful, perfectly virtuous, clever, tactful, and charming, angelic rather than feminine. Of them, Lady Ailesbury, Conway's wife, was the daughter of the 4th Duke of Argyll and the delightful Mary Bellenden, something of whose charm she inherited; Lady Strafford and Lady Mary Coke were also Campbells, daughters of the 2nd Duke of Argyll and Jenny Warburton; Lady Hertford, wife of Walpole's cousin the Marquis, was a sister of the 3rd Duke of Grafton, himself a friend of Conway's, and Grafton's wife, afterwards Countess of Upper Ossory, became one of the most regular of his correspondents.

As soon as Sir Edward Walpole's daughters grew up their uncle began to lavish upon them too his kindnesses and praises; he found in them and their children much of the affection and satisfaction he missed in his nephews Lords Orford and Cholmondely, and the portrait he finally constructed of his favourite niece, Maria, Lady Waldegrave, afterwards Duchess of Gloucester, is that of a type of tragic courage and self-sacrifice, while the timid, well-meaning, unsuccessful Duke develops by a similar idealizing process into a model of the patient prince.

This kind of attitude was not a pose, save to certain fine ladies, such as Lady Mary Coke, with whom an exaggeration of the language of devo-

tion was part of the game. Horace Walpole had his share of the domestic taste so universal, even among fashionable rakes, in the society of the eighteenth century. He wanted female companionship and sympathy, but it must be that of sterling good women, endowed also with wit and information; that secured, neither fashion nor rank was essential with him; we can hardly guess whether he enjoyed more the company of Lady Suffolk or Mrs. Clive, and he had quite a penchant for old ladies.

Not to mention Madame du Deffand, his blind old friend at Paris, to whom for fifteen years he wrote a weekly epistle, there lived near his home at Twickenham Lady Suffolk and Lady Hervey, once, as Mrs. Howard and Molly Lepelle, ornaments of the court of Queen Caroline, and celebrated by Peterborough and Pope. To Lady Hervey, who retained her charm and vivacity into old age, Walpole dedicated his "Anecdotes of Painting," and he sang her praises to his friends when, in 1768, she died, "with a tranquillity consonant to her usual propriety—yes, propriety is grace, and thus everybody may be graceful when other graces are fled."

Lady Suffolk—his only "rational acquaintance at Strawberry," as he declared—died a year earlier, and to her memory, too, he paid loyal tribute.

"I never saw more strict honour and justice. She bore *knowingly* the imputation<sup>1</sup> of being cove-

<sup>1</sup> It seems impossible to kill the delusion that George II

tous at a time that the strictest economy would by no means prevent her exceeding her income considerably . . . as it was not permitted me to do her justice when alive, I own I cannot help wishing that those who had a regard for her, may now at least know how much more she deserved it than even they suspected. In truth, I never knew a woman more respectable for her honour and principles, and have lost few persons in my life whom I shall miss so much.”<sup>1</sup>

His attitude to old ladies had something peculiarly chivalrous, he seemed to place himself, though modestly enough, on the same plane with them, as if they still were of the active and fashionable world. Their excellent stories of past days were of the deepest interest to him, and, indeed, supplied some portion of those Memoirs in which he knew his bid for permanent fame would lie.

It is to be feared that for a dull or vulgarly apparelled merit Walpole's recognition would be but slight. One of his favourite ladies was Mrs. Kitty

made her Countess of Suffolk for sinister reasons, and that he placed her, equally scandalously, in his wife's suite. The facts, of course, are that her first husband, brother of the 8th Earl of Suffolk, succeeded to the title, that he and Mrs. Howard had both entered the service of the Electoral Court in Hanover, and that she had been Caroline's confidential lady-in-waiting for years before George II displayed a particular attachment to her. She lived apart from her debauched and violent husband, and after his death married Mr. George Berkeley.

<sup>1</sup> No. 1177, to the Earl of Strafford.

Clive, the famous comedy actress, whose rubicund countenance and roundabout form might often be greeted in the Twickenham meadows. An unfriendly critic declared her "a mixture of combustibles . . . passionate and cross and vulgar," but it is impossible to accept the last, considering Walpole's fondness for her lively, if peppery company. He secured to her a pleasant cottage close to his grounds, which he termed "Clive-den," he planted her shrubbery, sent her venison, went to her supper parties, wrote a valedictory epilogue for her when she quitted the stage, relied on her sympathy, and gave his own in most practical ways when she was harassed by business difficulties, or, worse, by a nervous illness. She was a good musician, a capital cardplayer, and a lively wit, and the two made excellent playfellows. Her admirable landlord planted "the green lane leading from her cottage to the common: 'Well,' said she, 'when it is done what shall we call it'—'Why,' said I, 'what would you call it but Drury Lane?'"

Kitty could turn a compliment herself. "I met Mrs. Clive two nights ago, and told her I had been in the meadows, but would walk no more there, for there was all the world. 'Well,' says she, 'and don't you like the *World*; I hear it was very clever last Thursday.' " Walpole liked his fugitive pieces to meet with appreciation, though he resented being questioned or flattered about them.

He lost this cheerful companion in 1769, and to commemorate her placed a vase in the garden of her cottage, with a little inscription:



Ye Smiles and Jests, still hover round!  
This is Mirth's consecrated ground.  
Here lived the laughter-loving dame,  
A matchless actress, Clive her name.  
The Comic Muse with her retir'd  
And shed a tear when she expir'd.

Horace Walpole is sometimes called spiteful, and certainly there are many piquant gibes in his Letters more quotable than the less epigrammatic eulogies. No doubt he was not averse from repeating a joke which told against his special aversions, or those of his friends. But his antipathies were not many; he was inclined to expect the best of new acquaintances, ready to assume everything good of the young King and Queen, prepared to think well of untried George Grenville, able to improve his opinion of Mr. Pitt, unwilling to accept a bad reason for a young man's error if another could be found, and usually delighted by newly married couples. There was not a particle of envy or jealousy in his composition. His warmest outbursts of delight are called forth by the good fortune of his friends, and their griefs are his own. He never repeats gross scandal for scandal's sake; one might search his Letters in vain for particulars of any of the *causes célèbres* of the day. When it becomes necessary to mention the grave estrangement of the Duke and Duchess of Grafton he does so with the utmost reticence, although, the moment their divorce was accomplished and she had married Lord Ossory he finds it quite fitting to pass a jest with her on her former husband.

Indeed, it is impossible to doubt the kindness of Walpole's heart. Miss Berry says that in old age the fastidious and suffering scholar was not fond of the company of children in general: but it will not do to take his mock alarm at Chatham's "coachful of Grenville-looking children" as proving even this. "Young people, whom I think everything becomes," he expressly declares he liked. He certainly took great pains to entertain any particular child who came his way, such as Allan Ramsay's "delightful little daughter, who is as quick as Ariel," or Lady Suffolk's niece. And he delighted in the company of the Conways' little girl. They used to leave her to stay with him, while on their journeys, and he cautions Conway to let him know betimes when little Caroline will arrive, that her room may be properly aired. He was quite happy, he says, at Goodwood, though he could not join in most of the amusements, for "there were two or three children and two or three and forty dogs . . . for I generally prefer both to what the common people call *Christians*."

To his servants he was always considerate, and they stayed with him for long years on the friendliest terms, caring for his health anxiously, and making his interests theirs. His housekeeper Margaret was a notable woman to his visitors. He has painted her in a number of little touches in his letters. Her pride in the treasures of Strawberry Hill was not always according to knowledge, and her master would chuckle over her wonderful inventions. She "loves all creatures so well ('Horry'



kept, besides his beloved dog, birds, goldfish, squirrels, and favourite cats) that she would have been happy in the ark, and sorry when the Deluge ceased; unless people had come to see Noah's old house, which she would have liked still better than cramming his menagerie."

Walpole's humbler dependants were as sure of him as were his friends and their children, and felt assured that his time, purse and pains would be at their service upon appeal.

"I was extremely diverted t'other day," he tells Montagu (in 1761), "with my mother's and my old milliner. She said she had a petition to me—'What is it, Mrs. Burton?' 'It is on behalf of two poor orphans.'—I began to feel for my purse.—'What can I do for them, Mrs. Burton?'—'Only, if your honour would be so compassionate as to get them tickets for the Coronation.'—I could not keep my countenance—and these distressed *orphans* are two and three-and-twenty! Did you ever hear a more melancholy case?"

## II

### LITERARY LEISURE

WHEN people did not think of Mr. Walpole as the great minister's witty son, they thought of him as a polite author. Gentlemen of the first fashion often consented to bestow on their friends, and indeed even on the public, the benefit of their wit and wisdom in print; for though it might be more dignified to hand about in manuscript the complimentary verses and *jeux d'esprit* in which society delighted, those impudent fellows, the booksellers, were so clever in getting hold of a Person of Quality's good things and printing them for sale, that it was necessary, in the care of one's reputation, to be beforehand with them, and make sure of one's trifles being preserved correctly. Besides, political pieces, in any case, must appeal to the public, and such fashionable periodicals as the "Craftsman" or the "World," relied upon the wit of a Pulteney, a Chesterfield, or a Walpole.

To a man with the gift of just expression the fame of authorship was perhaps not without attraction, and Horace Walpole, ever original, had something fresh to set forth which exactly hit the times. The taste for art and *belles lettres* was at its height, probably, in the middle of the eighteenth

century, educated by our own "Augustan" authors, already classics, and stimulated by the constant intercourse with France and Italy which the long Walpolian epoch of peace had made easy to men of means. The grand tour system of education at all events popularized among the upper classes an ambition for culture. Foreign travel was scarcely interrupted by the Seven Years' War, people went round to Italy by the Rhine and Germany, and grumbled, and discovered Switzerland, and the moment the Peace of Paris was signed, hastened to France again. It was not until the European league against England was called forth by the American war, that our continental resources were cut off. And the closely ensuing French Revolution completed the severance.

Horace Walpole's enthusiasm for art and culture in general found, then, a ready response, and his "Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors" was properly appreciated by the aristocratic world. He published it in 1758, and this book and its successor, "Anecdotes of Painting in England" (1760), compiled by Walpole largely from the collections of Vertue, the engraver, which he had purchased, secured for him the position of an acknowledged authority upon letters and art.

He acquired besides the reputation of a knowing antiquarian, just when antiquities were coming into fashion. To him was due the publication of the "Life of Lord Herbert of Cherbury." The Conways gave him their ancient family papers to investigate. And he placed himself among historical

critics by his "Historic Doubts on Richard the Third," an endeavour to examine the usually accepted accounts of that King's villainies in the light of common sense.

These, and many other more fugitive productions, gave Walpole a considerable place in the estimation of the day, and provided him with an occupation which he loved. He seems, indeed, to have valued himself as an author chiefly by the celerity and careless ease with which he tossed off his compositions. To write in less than an hour and a half a fable which immediately passed through five editions, or to finish a volume of "Anecdotes of Painting" in a month, indicated not merely the genius of a gentleman, but his far removal from the ranks of those scribblers who made a professional business out of their abilities.

Nobody would have dreamed of confusing amateur actors and actresses of the first rank in society with paid professionals, but it was not always quite so clear whether a gentlemanly person who wrote, or who drew designs, was the accomplished amateur, or a superior artisan. Were not Earl Harcourt's etchings "superior in boldness and freedom of stroke to anything we have seen of established artists"? Lord Strafford's design for his new house-front was "a model of the most perfect taste in architecture," and Lady Di Beauclerk's drawings were so beyond the mere painter as to be enshrined in a special cabinet at Strawberry Hill, so easy was it for the well-born to transcend the painful efforts of the mercantile middleclasses and the mere professionals.

The pleasure of literary composition led Walpole to another experiment: the setting up of a private printing press, the first productions whereof were Gray's Odes.

To be imprinted at the Strawberry Hill press was an honour Walpole did not accord to all who desired it. He used sometimes to grace a friend's compositions, sometimes to print his own books, or such of his verses, catalogues, etc., as he wished to give away.

So much literary and artistic activity brought him into a considerable correspondence with other men of letters, with Mason, with the learned antiquarian, William Cole, the artist Richard Bentley, and with Gray. Walpole considered Gray as entitled to the highest rank, "a poet that ought to be placed in the first line." He had brought out a fine edition of his friend's poems, illustrated by Bentley, and was seldom more easily moved to wrath than by some undervaluation of Gray by the critics. They exchanged letters, and Gray's criticisms of Walpole seem to have been sometimes severe. On the other hand he remonstrates with Walpole for overrating him and misleading the booksellers by calling everything he wrote an Ode, "though it be but a receipt to make apple-dumplings." "No wonder Dodsley gulped," adds Gray, when he found one of the anticipated *odes* only "A Long Story."

Gray was a welcome, if rare, visitor at Strawberry Hill, with the country contentment whereof he could sympathize. "I congratulate you on your happiness," he writes in 1757, "and seem to un-

derstand it. The receipt is obvious: it is only, Have something to do; but how few can apply it!" Possibly the other might think this but a meagre description of his varied artistic and literary activities.

There was a good deal in the humour of the two which was alike, though Walpole had a more sunny temper, and was without Gray's diffidence. It was his cat who became the tragic heroine of the famous Ode

'Twas on a lofty vase's side,

and her vase was to be seen in a place of honour in the "cloister" of the house ever after, with a verse from the poem inscribed upon it.

One would give something to have Walpole's letter describing that melancholy catastrophe, which called forth Gray's delightful answer (from Cambridge, 1st March 1747):—

"As one ought to be particularly careful to avoid blunders in a compliment of condolence, it would be a sensible satisfaction to me (before I testify my sorrow and the sincere part I take in your misfortune) to know for certain who it is I lament. I knew Zaza and Selima (Selima, was it, or Fatima?) or rather I knew them both together; for I cannot justly say which was which. Then as to your handsome cat, the name you distinguish her by, I am no less at a loss, as well knowing one's handsome cat is always the cat one likes best; or, if one be alive and the other dead, it is usually the latter that is the handsomest. Besides,



THOMAS GRAY

FROM A PAINTING BY J. Æ. ECCARDT





if the point were never so clear, I hope you do not think me so ill-bred or so imprudent as to forfeit all my interest in the survivor: Oh no! I would rather seem to mistake, and imagine to be sure it must be the tabby one that had met with this sad accident. . . . Heigh ho! I feel (as you to be sure have done long since) that I have very little to say, at least in prose. Somebody will be the better for it; I do not mean you, but your cat, feuë Made-moiselle Selime, whom I am about to immortalize for one week or fortnight, as follows,—

*[follows the Ode]*

“There’s a poem for you. It is rather too long for an epitaph.”

On the death of Gray Walpole insisted upon himself revising the passage in Mason’s “Life,” which related to their early quarrel. He feared lest Mason, the friend of both, in his anxiety not to hurt the feelings of the survivor, might tell the incident in a way which should seem to leave Gray to some degree in the wrong. Walpole in fact rewrote the passage, so that the entire blame might accrue to himself. “I am so sincerely zealous,” he explained to Mason, “that all possible honour should be done to my two friends [Gray and West] that I care not a straw for serving as a foil to them,” and this, although he was aware that in the account of their early years, “of my two friends and me I only make a most indifferent figure,” and although he was genuinely hurt to find

how little kindness Gray appeared to have felt towards him at that time.

He guarded Gray's reputation as jealously as he did that of Sir Robert Walpole himself, and three years after his death writes jubilantly to Mason: <sup>1</sup>

“What is the commonest thing in the world?—Lord! how can you be so dull as not to guess? why to be sure, to hunt for a thing forty times, and give it over, and then find it when you did not look for it, exactly where you had hunted forty times. This happened to me this very morning, and overjoyed I am. I suppose you don't guess what I have found? Really, Mr. Mason, you great poets are so absent, and so unlike the rest of the world! Why what should I have found, but the thing in the world that was most worth finding? a hidden treasure—a hidden fig; no, Sir, not the certificate of the Duchess of Kingston's first marriage, nor the lost books of Livy, nor the longitude, nor the philosopher's stone, nor all Charles Fox has lost. I tell you it is what I have searched for a thousand times, and had rather have found than the longitude, if it was a thousand times longer. Oh, you do guess, do you? I thought I never lost anything in my life. I was sure I had them, and so I had; and now am I not a good soul, to sit down and send you a copy incontinently? Don't be too much obliged to me neither: I am in a panic till there are more copies than mine, and as the post does not go till to-morrow, I am in terror lest the house

<sup>1</sup> No. 1559 (September 1774).

should be burnt to-night. I have a mind to go and bury a transcript in the field; but then if I should be burnt too! nobody would know where to look for it. Well, here it is! I think your decorum will not hold it proper to be printed in the *Life*, nor would I have it. We will preserve copies, and the devil is in it, if some time or other it don't find its way to the press. My copy is in his own handwriting; but who could doubt it: I know but one man upon earth who could have written it but Gray."

The satirical verses of that age—in this case Gray's "Jemmy Twitcher"—have long since lost their savour, but the letter bringing the triumphant piece of news is surely worthy to be set beside Madame de Sévigné's "M. de Lauzun épouse dimanche au Louvre—devinez qui?"

As Madame de Sévigné was Walpole's most chosen admiration, "my Saint," the utmost compliment he could pay to his dead friend was a comparison with her. Scolding Mason for his shocking lack of appreciation of her letters he begs him to "Read them again; they are one of the very few books, that, like Gray's *Life*, improve upon one every time one reads them. You have still less taste, if you like my letters, which have nothing original, and if they have anything good so much the worse, for it can only be from having read her letters and his." He still, at fifty-eight, devoutly subscribed to his literary faith of a quarter of a century earlier, when he had once remonstrated with

Mann for comparing his letters with Madame de Sévigné's: "Absolute treason! Do you know, there is scarce a book in the world I love so much as her letters?" Even Madame du Deffand, brilliant as she was, he would hardly allow to place herself beside the adorable Sévigné. She once composed for him a letter in the style of Madame de Sévigné: but "the two ladies ought not to be compared," notes Walpole, "one was all natural care and tenderness—the other charms by the graces of the most polished style, which, however, are less beautiful than the graces of the wit they adorn."<sup>1</sup>

To Gray alone it seems had Horace Walpole fully confided the secret of his own compilation of *Memoirs*, a work which had originated (as he had told George Montagu) in a wish to set down for posterity the occurrences of the year 1751, and which grew into the valuable and delightful "*Memoirs of the Last Ten Years of George II.*," destined to be continued by the "*Memoirs of the Reign of George III.*"

Gray applauded the plan with what, in him, was enthusiasm:

"This comes du fond de ma cellule to salute Mr. H. W. not so much him that visits and votes and goes to White's and to court; as the H. W. in his rural capacity; snug in his tub on Windsor-hill and brooding over folios of his own creation"; and, whimsically speaking of Walpole's literary pro-

<sup>1</sup> See Preface to description of Strawberry Hill.

ductions as his children, "Among all the little folks, my godsons and daughters, I can not choose but enquire more particularly after the health of one; I mean (without a figure) the *Memoires*. . . . Do they begin to think of making their appearance in the world, that is to say, fifty years hence, to make posterity stare, and good people cross themselves?"

And again, some four years later:

"I rejoice to find you apply (pardon the use of so odious a word) to the history of your own times. Speak, and spare not. Be as impartial as you can; and after all, the world will not believe you are so, though you did make as many protestations as Bishop Burnet . . . so you must rest satisfied with the testimony of your own conscience."

It was of some importance to keep the secret of these compositions, and probably no one else save Conway had any inkling of those secret Journals which must have occupied so much time and labour. To him Walpole writes: "I can't afford to live such a life [as Conway's] I have Conway papers to sort; I have lives of the painters to write; I have my prints to paste, my house to build, and everything in the world to tell posterity—How am I to find time for all this?"

The "Memoirs" did not see the light until long after their author's death. He took pains to bequeath them in such a manner to the joint care of the representatives of General Conway and of his

own niece, Lady Waldegrave, as best ensured their honest publication after a certain date.

It would be out of place to attempt any estimate of their value; probably they are reckoned indispensable by every student of that epoch of our history—not, indeed, for any profound insight displayed, but for the vivid portraiture in words by a master of style, who was also the intimate of those he painted. For his honesty, we have his Letters, written day by day, wherewith to check the accuracy of his more deliberate reports, and it would be difficult to convict him of any conscious misrepresentation. The value of both "Letters" and "Memoirs" resides precisely in the fact that they are the works of a man who was politically no wiser than his generation. He shows us what was seen at the time.

The magic which renders his legacies imperishable lies in the style. Trained in the epoch when our English prose was at its best, he preserved the art, which indeed was to him a second nature, far into an age of decadence.

In the middle of the eighteenth century people apparently could not help writing and speaking good English. Their current magazines, even the political pieces, are still to be read with pleasure. The letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and of many less famous persons, to be found in such collections as the correspondence of Mrs. Delany or Lady Suffolk, display the purity of style then instinctive among the educated, and perhaps not only among the educated; the very police reports of the Monthly

Register suggest that the average of the lower classes could express themselves with a clarity and purity of diction long since vanished from the ken of newspaper reporters.

But before the close of Walpole's life English speech, in Parliament, newspapers, and letters alike, had degenerated amazingly. Lady Mary Coke is perfectly clear and unaffected, but she is not to be compared with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. In the reign of George III taste declined rapidly; at the same time that sententiousness set in, the delicate distinctions in the meanings of words began to be forgotten. Burke could be grandiose and Johnson ponderous without inaccuracy, but others could not: and indeed Walpole, who put style first in things literary, as manners in things human, had little toleration for either of them. Whether because the young were worse taught (and if scholastic posts were bestowed on the same system as other places, nothing would be likelier), or because the interruption of intercourse with the continent told upon our native style, or from the laziness and slovenliness apt to set in among the youth of the very wealthy classes, the generations of the latter part of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries often mauled their mother tongue disgracefully.

The slipshod manner in which George III expressed himself<sup>1</sup> was doubtless acquired from his tutor, Lord Bute, who was capable of writing:<sup>2</sup> "I

<sup>1</sup> Cf. his letters in Rose, "Pitt and Napoleon."

<sup>2</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., 1909, Various, vi.



will not call to mind any occurrences which passed from the death of the Prince of Wales . . . for I not only buried them in oblivion myself but endeavoured to eradicate them elsewhere . . . all former habitudes were so broken off between your lordship and me at the demise. . . ." But we read of the admiration felt by his contemporaries for the clear and moderate style of the younger Pitt, and how no less a critic than Fox declared that, if he himself were never at a loss for *a* word, Pitt was never at a loss for *the* word—and we find, if we read him, that he is, certainly, as clear as any good man of business, but that he frequently uses the wrong word. He will speak of never having "a wish which did not terminate in the dearest interests of the nation," or of "taking every step towards peace that can be likely to effect the object."

But after the early close of Pitt's career the oratorical and epistolary style of Castlereagh, Liverpool, and their contemporaries was to reach a lower depth. They made a habit, not merely of using any word or phrase as a substitute for any other, but of running riot in verbosity and involved allusions as, evidently, an easier expedient than plain speaking. Political exigency may possibly have had its share in introducing this kind of mazy speech, for Shelburne and Castlereagh would seem to be the first of our statesmen who were regularly occupied in explaining the meaning they themselves attributed to language which their hearers had taken to mean something quite different. While for the generality of the



private writers and ordinary journalists of the day it must regretfully be said that they thought involved statement and slang clever writing. The age of the "genteel" and "the bore," of the Prince Regent and the models of Rowlandson, thought vaguely and spoke clumsily.

Happily this gradual decline of style did not affect Horace Walpole. If experience taught him nothing in political philosophy, at least he retained the literary virtue of his youth. He was probably aware of his own merit in spite of his disclaimers, and his animus against Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whom he felt to be a not altogether despicable rival in his own epistolary sphere, might alone intimate his consciousness of the worth of his own Letters. He took pains to have them preserved and, when possible, returned to him, and his own annotations here and there, correcting an error, explaining an allusion, prove that they were destined for publication in the future. But his intention never spoiled the spontaneity of those wonderful Letters.

His writing preserves something of the charm of his conversation, varied, enlivening, sufficiently personal to be intimate, yet scarcely ever egotistic.

But it would be absurd to endeavour an analysis of the art of the most delightful writer of letters in our language; the charm and the art alike may not be dissected. It is a pleasure to the lover of good terms to follow Horry's descriptions of the same incident to different friends (*e.g.*, the coronation of George III), invariably tallying in the

minutest particulars but never quite alike. "I cannot transcribe from myself," he once explained. If he really talked as he writ, no wonder friends liked to stay with him at his Strawberry Hill, and pestered him to drag himself away from its charms to visit them.

He must have been almost without affectations; his valetudinarian, even effeminate, ways were a part of him, and cannot have produced any disagreeable effect. Nor did he obtrude them on others. It is only to old friends that he sends accounts of his gouty sufferings. It was the sincerity of his letters which made them, and makes them, so precious.

For we must recollect that this was in ever-increasing contrast with the habits of the world of George III. Half-way between the noble prose of the earlier half-century and the insipid involutions of its close came the age of Sentiment. People intended to write finely, improvingly, to be a little above their companions. They were ready to think that there was "nothing in the world so noble as a man of Sentiment." "Joseph Surface" was no creation, only an exaggeration of a type. It was quite usual at a feast to ask the honoured guest to "give us a sentiment," instead of a toast, to drink to. It need not be very deep—"The Best" was pretty Lady Coventry's on one occasion. "Who says we can't drink my Lady Coventry's health before her face" was the natural rejoinder. Nelson's Trafalgar signal is the sublimest example of the sentiment, but its absurdities do not

seem to have been patent to the writers or the readers of scores of turgid, self-conscious epistles, which ought not to be wholly forgotten, lest the superiority of Walpole's achievement be unperceived. They are but on a level with the lumbering buffoonery, the mere rudeness, which often had to do duty in lieu of wit—witness John Hobart's letters to his great-aunt, Lady Suffolk.

Among the ingenious and improving authors whom the age of George III agreed in valuing very highly was Dr. Edward Young, author of the edifying "Night Thoughts." The literary clergyman was blessed by the friendship of a duchess, that excellent and charming Duchess of Portland known to us in the pleasant *Memoirs of Mrs. Delany*. And Dr. Young cultivated her Grace's good opinion with assiduity. To take but one specimen, almost at random:<sup>1</sup>

"I received with joy your kind remembrance of me, but far otherwise at the same time your Grace's black catalogue of calamities. You say Mrs. Donellan has been in danger; we see therefore that a good understanding is no security. You say Mrs. Montague is in danger; therefore it is certain that wit can make nothing more than a poor name immortal. You say, Madam, that Mrs. Delany is better; therefore she, to my sorrow, has been ill; long may she live, not only to

<sup>1</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., 1904, Papers of the Marquis of Bath, i, p. 321 (1753).

give a lustre to your Grace's grotto, but an ornament to your sex.

"When such as these suffer, what impudence is it in me to complain! though you, Madam, have had more than your share, yet have you not engrossed all colds to yourself. I have been much out of order; but am, I bless God, much better, and rear my head once more to see most of my old acquaintance and friends drop before me. . . ."

Mrs. Montagu, the famous blue-stocking, also took epistolary advantage of an acquaintance with the duchess, though without angling for pecuniary results with the persistence and success of Dr. Young:

"There are some things in the world so precious," she writes,<sup>1</sup> "that there are neither scales nor measures by which to regulate them: the heart feels their value, and will not submit to anything that those respectable appraisers of ordinary affairs, reason and experience, can say about them. Of this kind is the Duchess of Portland's health, and though Hygea and Aesculapius were to give joint security that she should be well soon, I could not be easy till I heard she was actually so. . . . May I beg that your Grace's woman would write me a line? . . ."

"I might perhaps on any other occasion have asked this favour of Mrs. Delany, but as your Grace's good health is the only subject to which

<sup>1</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., *ibid.*, p. 345 (1779).

her pen could not add charms, or your indisposition such as it could not mitigate and render less painful and unwelcome; it would be wrong to employ in vain what would have such admirable power in any other matter."

Horace Walpole, too, varied his style according to the degree of the recipient of the letter; his epistles to the Duke of Gloucester or to Lord Bute are exceedingly respectful, but there is no note of adulation or inferiority. To be sure, the gulf betwixt the fine gentleman and the Prince, or the First Minister, was infinitely more bridgeable than that which separated a parson or a middle-class lady from dukes and duchesses. Walpole becomes punctiliously courteous to persons whose standing is somewhat below his own. To his deputy in the Exchequer Office, Mr. Bedford, whom he would occasionally request to execute some commission for him, he is almost apologetically urbane, except, indeed, when he has to express censure on some irregular dealing, when the tone of authority is absolute.

There is, perhaps, a certain note of aloofness about his letters to his clerical correspondents. To Cole, the antiquarian, he can write concisely and gravely enough, while to those whose erudition he respects the less his politeness is the more elaborate. It was not precisely that, non-religious himself, he thought worse of Mason, Cole, or Zouch for being clergymen, but the Church was, in his eyes, as purely worldly a calling as the Bar or the Army;

nor is it possible to pretend that the Georgian hierarchy could have warranted any other assumption; only if the conduct of bishops, deans, or parsons was noticeably in contradiction to their professed principles did he vent a sneer, much as one might feel it fair to jeer at effeminacy, say, in a sailor. Unhappily promotion in the Church was attained in those days by a path of time-serving, political jobbery, or personal adulation very inconsistent with the ideals ascribed to ministers of religion; the Churchman, then, had entered a profession where progress could be achieved solely by improper conduct. Consequently Walpole assumed that any who accepted promotion must be tainted with this hypocrisy, and roundly taunted Mason (in 1784) in such contemptuous terms as necessarily caused a cessation of their long friendship, until, a few months before Walpole's death, another's insult to the memory of Gray gave the magnanimous Mason room to appeal to his friend again—an olive-branch which Walpole accepted with affectionate zeal.

It is pretty clear that Walpole took for granted that his own superior station and "independence" entitled him to bestow benevolent admonitions on people who, however worthy, were not upon his own plane of society, nor would he tolerate their dull manners for the sake of their learning.

"Mr. Gough wants to be introduced to me! Indeed! I would see him . . . but he is so dull that he would only be troublesome—and besides you know I shun authors, and would never have been

one myself, if it obliged me to keep such bad company. They are always in earnest, and think their profession serious, and dwell upon trifles, and reverence learning. . . . Mr. Gough is very welcome to see Strawberry Hill, or I would help him to any scraps in my possession that would assist his publications, though he is one of those industrious who are only re-burying the dead—but I cannot be acquainted with him.”

Nobody could accuse Mr. Horace Walpole of taking his own authorship too seriously; he owned to being too impatient even to correct his own press: Gray had once desired to correct certain proof sheets, “for you know you are incapable of it.” “It is very true,” comments Walpole, “and I hope future edition-mongers will say of those of Strawberry Hill, they have all the beautiful negligence of a gentleman.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Such, perhaps, as that in the Works of Lord Orford, where Gray is made to compliment him on “brooding over *follies* of his own creation.”



### III

#### THE MODERN TASTE

**A**N age of wealth is an age of taste, and the eighteenth century in England saw the development of taste and of tastes till, before the close of the century, self-consciousness and self-indulgence had involved the wealthy classes in a kind of riot of luxury, megalomania, and vice, which demonstrated the complete absence of any taste at all.

But in the middle of the century architects and landscape gardeners were directing the judgement of cultivated and travelled gentlemen according to certain canons, Italian as to architecture, English as to landscape, which for a time obtained the ascendancy of a creed. The gentry who raised their palladian mansions in the midst of spacious solitudes, leaving their Jacobean or Tudor manor-houses to fall to decay along with the despised villages, were not content till their chambers were hung with silk, damask, or the new Indian paper, and furnished with pictures and statuary fetched from the Continent. Even Sir Robert Walpole, hardly himself an instance of refinement, collected a number of rare pictures, the early delight of his youngest son.



But not all could collect masterpieces; the tasteful therefore patronized artists and used to commission them to make drawings in Italy of favourite or celebrated scenes, or copies of famous pictures. A nobleman on tour would take his artist with him to depict the scenes of his travels; a gentleman proud of his country seat would hire an artist for a year or two to draw its aspects for his friends, or to copy designs for furniture or buildings which here or there might strike his fancy. Thus did the Earl of Burlington annex the designer William Kent, and Horace Walpole his Mr. Müntz.

The social position of the landscape gardener, architect, artist, furniture-maker, was of course that of an inferior, a handicraftsman of superior value, whose possession reflected credit on the taste of the patron.

Walpole's Müntz was a Swiss painter, discovered for him by Bentley, "starving on seven pictures for a guinea," and sent to England. Walpole retained him for some years at "£100 a year, my house, table, and utmost countenance." Sometimes he was loaned to a friend for a few months. The terms were good, but the artist, though "an inoffensive, good creature," would not work; he "had rather ponder over a foreign gazette than a pallet," and he entered into female relationships to which his master objected. Finally Mr. Müntz began to give himself airs and grew impertinent: "I turned his head, and was forced to turn him out of doors," grumbled the disappointed

patron: "poets and painters imagine *they* confer the honour when they are protected."

When a gentleman's house was complete the grounds claimed his attention; and here English taste was to strike out on an original line. Bridgman and Kent, and their powerful patrons, Queen Caroline and the Earl of Burlington, led the revolt against the solid artifices of out-door masons' work which, under the Versailles régime, had stood for gardening. The stiff pleasure-gardens of most English mansions had been laid out rather in Dutch than French style, but were little less formal. It appears to have been the example of Italian villas, the admiration for Italian landscape, and, above all, the art of the great landscape painters which inspired Burlington and Kent, and Lancelot Brown in their treatment of parks and of the famous "natural gardens" which created the new model.

The "English garden" of a foreign castle still shows a stretch of green banks and curving walks and clumps of tall trees, with a neglected pond or canal somewhere in the midst. In England itself a great deal more was comprehended. Landscape gardening, as "an art that realizes painting and improves nature," was developed here during the eighteenth century, and should be among its proudest boasts. It was a costly and a lengthy work. The prospect to be attained was its goal, its means—the careful planting of choice timber, perhaps over whole hills and in avenues designed to lead the eye to some pleasing object, such as a

church spire or a noble mansion; the laying out of curved walks or raising undulating slopes, if the ground were flat, and the tracing of water ways to form cascades, or, better, a long sheet of bright water against which groups of fine trees, or of statuary, or the lines of a pretty bridge, might display their elegance.

Horace Walpole, who expounded the new creed and practice in the most interesting Essay on gardening our language affords, boldly disposed of French taste, along with conventional tradition, in his characteristically irreverent manner:

“When a Frenchman reads of the garden of Eden, I do not doubt but he concludes it was something approaching to that of Versailles, with clipt hedges, berceaux, and trellis-work. If his devotion humbles him so far as to allow that, considering who designed it, there might be a labyrinth full of Æsop’s fables, yet he does not conceive that four of the largest rivers of the world were half so magnificent as an hundred fountains full of statues by Girardon.”

The stiff fashion, whether Dutch or French, and whatever its early claim to admiration, had long since run to absurdity, even to the extreme of chopping trees and bushes into fancy shapes to imitate stone models. Walpole lavishes his contempt on the application of the topiary’s shears to “the lovely wildness of form with which nature has distinguished each various species of tree and shrub. The venerable oak, the romantic beech, the

useful elm, and even the sweeping circuit of the lime, the regular round of the chestnut, and the almost moulded orange tree, were corrected by such fantastic admirers of symmetry. The compass and square were of more use in the plantations than the nurseryman."

The first postulate, then, of the new gardening was finely grown trees. The unlucky French had been deprived of these materials of beauty by the shortsighted law that growing timber thirty years old became royal property; of course people cut it down young: "a landscape and a crown surveyor are incompatible"; but English scenery had not yet been banned, and its grand asset was its woodland.

Walpole is doubtless right in tracing the development of the beautiful English parks and natural gardens from Bridgman's daring revolution of abolishing the walled enclosure and substituting for the wall a sunken fence, or ha-ha, which would not interrupt the prospect. Then, to seize the opportunity, "appeared Kent, painter enough to taste the charms of landscape, bold and opiniative enough to dare and to dictate, and born with a genius to strike out a great system from the twilight of imperfect ways. He leaped the fence and saw that all nature was a garden."

Thenceforward the *prospect* is the dominating note in the gardens of the great, and the aim of the gardeners is to lead the eye by subtle degrees from the shaven turf to the more distant vista or panorama.

To be in the fashion, then, stairs, terraces, pergolas, and waterworks must (with a sigh) be relinquished, but substitutes were permitted to gratify the eternal passion for bricks and mortar. Kent not only discovered and applied "the principles of perspective and light and shade; we owe the restoration of Greece and the diffusion of architecture to his skill in landscape." The necessity for diffusing architecture about the garden arose from the laying out of the grounds to provide so many prospects. A view must have a centre, a vista, an objective, and thus great scope was given to the architectural fancy which should devise the pleasing objects. The mason got back his own, and a new refuge was found for artificiality.

The most admired objects were the pseudo-classical. Here and there a nobleman might rebuild the parish church on a fresh site, to afford a view of the spire to his parlour windows, or, like the ingenious Mr. Rigby, erect a steeple on the end of a cottage for the same purpose—a most admirable notion says Walpole; or he might set up a bridge, conducting no-whither, or a ruined castle or bit of cloister, but, as a rule, the objects of beauty perched upon the hillocks, or set at the termination of an avenue, were little mock temples, so many concrete copies from Poussin or Claude Lorraine, or from Italian sketches.

The aim, in fact, was to translate a pictorial scene into reality. The canons of taste were derived from the picture, and this artificial standard was applied to natural scenery. Walpole expressly defends

the architectural system on this very ground. "A feigned steeple of a distant church or an unreal bridge to disguise the termination of water . . . being intended to improve the landscape, are no more to be condemned because common, than they would be if employed by a painter in the composition of a picture." "Nature improved and formed by art" is the phrase eternally used: "A noble terrace," cries one, "formed by nature and assisted by art." There can never have been an age in which the artistic taste was so "pure" in its independence of association. The reality of antiquity made no appeal, the external aspect alone was worthy of consideration. "What hurts the appearance of [Queen's College] library is that all the books are chained to their places," notes a visitor to Oxford. Hence we find the rage for the picturesque entailing a craze for imitations. The Palladian style of architecture required stone, so the builders, discarding the warm brick of the earlier Georgian style, rejoiced in "artificial stone," or stucco, and within doors decorated with wall-paper designed to imitate stucco, with the fashionable French *or moulu*, or imitation gold, and with endless imitations of marble.

In the garden, too, "new fashions, like new religions (which are new fashions), often lead men to the most opposite excesses," as Walpole wisely observes; Kent's "ruling principle was, that *Nature abhors a straight line*—his mimics, for every genius has his apes, seemed to think that she could love nothing but what was crooked." There ensued a



good deal of absurdity, of course, among those who could not command the talents and the means which created a Stowe or a Hagley, and Walpole, whose garden taste was excellent, even had the courage to regret the general destruction of the old to make room for the new style; "though an avenue crossing a park or separating a lawn, and intercepting views from the seats to which it leads, are capital faults, yet a great avenue cut through woods, perhaps before a park, has a noble air, and

Like footmen running before coaches  
To tell the inn what lord approaches.

announces the habitation of some man of distinction."

In especial he censures in the extravagance of the new fashion, "the total banishment of all particular neatness immediately about a house, which is frequently left gazing by itself in the middle of a park," and pleads for a few sheltered walks, "comforts ill exchanged for the few picturesque days that we enjoy." "Whenever a family can purloin a warm and even something of an old fashioned garden from the landscape designed for them by the undertaker in the fashion, without interfering with the picture, they will find satisfaction on those days that do not invite strangers to come and see their improvements."

One perceives that the style soon became a convention, and that a system only capable of being put in practice by the very wealthy was lavishly copied, piecemeal, by the less endowed.

Walpole, as a just critic, put his finger on the main error. Our ancestors, says he, very justly built vast mansions, for they housed the entire family in all its generations and cousinhoods. But this method of living in a clan was long since changed, "and yet the same superb palaces are still created, becoming a pompous solitude to the owner, and a transient entertainment to a few travellers." "The Doric portico, the Palladian bridge, the Gothic ruin, the Chinese pagoda, that surprise the stranger, soon lose their charms to their surfeited master." Dwelling alone in the midst of the land, in short, was deadly dull, and frequently the loneliness entailed eventual desertion of the palace.

Oxfordshire, for instance, is full of the works of that spacious epoch, and they wear too often but a melancholy aspect. Plantations long unthinned are strangled by ivy and briars; the little artificial lakes stagnate beneath marsh plants, their tiny water-works rotted away; Grecian porticoes are half buried in rank evergreens, once exotics; ornate portals open upon rough cart tracks, while turfy drives and walks and even the most renowned banks of Thames are choked by jungles of nettles.

There still stands the vast mansion, stranded on its barren prairie or buried in the gloomy shadows of a featureless wood of old trees, its windows shuttered and its columned entrance lichen-stained. Or here the more modest and still habitable manor house hides its graceful porch and parapet behind a density of shrubbery or height of wall which





### ROUSHAM HALL, OXFORDSHIRE

"Kent has nowhere shown so much taste. The house is old, and was bad : he has improved it, stuck as close as *he* could to Gothic."—*H. H. Aspley*.



testifies not to alarums of the Middle Ages, but to the supercilious pride of the later eighteenth century. Repellent or attractive, the age has engraved itself on the face of the county, from emparked Ditchley, criticized so severely by Horace Walpole, to Rousham, which enraptured him, displaying still to the traveller's eye the charm of its tiny village perched on the green hill-crest beside its apparently dominating church—fast shut up, in reality, from the expanse of nature by a mighty prison wall. For the magnates loved to take to themselves the houses of God in possession as the choicest perquisite of tasteful wealth, the finishing touch to a park. So Great Tew, and Glympton, and Kiddington and scores of other ancient churches have been deliberately fenced off from their village folk and annexed by shrubbery and winding walk to the private garden.

It may be difficult for the present age to feel anything but impatient indignation before this final self-assertion of arrogance, yet it ought, in bare justice, to balance wrath with eternal gratitude for other and living monuments of the landscape gardening lords. Those groups and belts and avenues of varied timber which have actually etched a scenery upon the simple undulations of the midlands, result from no pure accident of benevolent Nature. They are a heritage from that strange century, a legacy (even if in a second or third degree) from opulent designers who sketched the picturesque by the mile.

Such elaborate creations as the great country

seats were, of course, not devised for the mere use or enjoyment of the owner. Men lived in each other's opinions and bid for admiration, and it was all the fashion to visit each other's parks and mansions, and to admire or to criticize the improvements, an amusement often rendered very genuine by the hospitality of the courteous hosts, who were thankful, in their splendid isolation, to welcome company, and comforted by the flattery of admiration.

Fortunately for our exacter information the average opinions of an average man have been precisely recorded, at tedious length, by a worthy and quite uninspired traveller, the second Viscount Grimston, who, in 1768, endured a tour in order to study the beauties of his native land.<sup>1</sup>

Lord Grimston's real interest was stirred by manufactures, busy ports, improved modes of metalling roads, the new canals then just a-making, and the new, ingenious machinery, so benevolent in its effect of setting the poor on work, his views whereof are completely Elizabethan. But fashion constrained the traveller to gaze at the orthodox sights, that is, the country seats, and he did so armed with contemporary guide books and primed beforehand with the correct opinions. He admires regularity above all things; a mansion with a front of thirty-eight windows all alike, and several rows more about to be added is accorded his heartiest praise. He always knows whether columns are Ionic or Corinthian, and he applies

<sup>1</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., 1906. Verulam Papers.

the term *Gothic* to anything ancient and uninteresting: "house an old Gothic brick building"; of Lichfield ("a large well-paved town"), he notes "there are in it two good parish churches and a cathedral, which is a very strong Gothic edifice much admired for its antiquity." Ripon "cathedral is a large Gothic building, and carries the appearance of great antiquity." Antiquity to him can be nothing but odd, it cannot be beautiful, neither is it interesting; he scarcely ever admires beauty except in something quite new, such as St. Paul's Church at Liverpool. *Romantic* seems to be another bad word; it means wild and uncomfortable, the kind of country where steep hills and rough roads made the carriage jolt and tired the horses, for his lordship was very much annoyed by discomfort, and was sorry for himself when he was on one occasion "necessitated to sit down to a very homely dinner of bread and cheese." *Neat* is with him a term of strong approval, as it was to an earlier generation.

There were, of course, degrees of perfection among the small palaces with which the great were adorning England. Although the Duke of Montagu had built Boughton "after a model of the palace of Versailles, with noble paintings in the hall, galleries, etc., and 90 acres of gardens adorned with statues, marble urns, fountains, aeries, canals, wildernesses, terraces, etc.," to quote an appreciative guide book, it did not by any means attain to the first rank. Neither did Blenheim, on which the nation, Queen Anne, and the Duchess of Marl-

borough had lavished such vast sums of money, and which perhaps may be taken to have set the example in this magnificent mode of spending and creating. Walpole roundly termed it one of the ugliest places in England. It suggested to him "a giant's castle who had laid waste all the country about him," the park around it was as ugly as the house, while the bridge, "like the beggars at the old Duchess's gate, begs for a drop of water and is refused."

By universal consent, Lord Temple's seat of Stowe was accorded the very first place among the beautiful seats of the great:

Lord Grimston waxes almost poetical over it:

"If any house can claim the epithet of magnificent it must be this; if any garden that of beautiful it must be this at Stowe. Nature has given sufficient water, which has been improved and properly formed by art. The entrance into these Elysian Fields is so ornamented by a view of the house at a distance and beauties of the garden on each side, that it must immediately captivate the mind of the beholder. The walk round is computed to be five miles, but the variety of pleasing objects, particularly of temples, obelisks, pavilions, etc., takes off the tedium so much that it appears to be much less. These buildings, which are mostly dedicated to the heathen gods, or to some of his departed friends, have each of them their inscription, which shows in their application the good taste of the person who chose them,"



etc. And this, too, was the opinion of almost everybody, including Lady Hester Pitt, who replies to Pitt's question, what she admires most at Stowe, that she agrees with others, that the little Greek temple is the principal gem.

"What do you mean," cries a Lyttelton,<sup>1</sup> a kinsman of the noble owner, exiled to America as a colonial Governor, "by mentioning Stowe to me? If I were to suffer my thoughts to dwell but for a few minutes upon the *Templum Veneris Hortensis* and some other things I have seen and remember there, I shou'd have the worse opinion of all publick employments for seven years to come."

It is, then, suggestive of an heretical opinion that Walpole, who visited Stowe more than once, should avoid writing either direct criticism or encomium of it to his correspondents. He occasionally permits himself to poke fun at Lord Temple's inscriptions to his friends, with whom he was so apt to quarrel that the mottoes were continually being altered or wiped out; he revelled in his own reflections on the troop of notables who had built, planted, and visited there, from Pope to Glover, Chatham to Wilkes, but the place itself, if one may read beneath his hints, seemed to him to lack unity and intimacy. Only in 1770, when he was a member of a small house party there to entertain old Princess Emily, does he comment on any of the famous prospects so carefully arranged: "You are startled with delight on looking through

<sup>1</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., 1909, Various, vi.

the arch erected for Princess Emily, you at once see through a glade the river winding at the bottom, from which a thicket rises, arched over with trees, but opened and discovering a hillock full of haycocks, beyond which in front is the Palladian bridge, and again over that a larger hill crowned with the castle. It is a tall landscape framed by the arch and the over-bowering trees, and comprehending more beauties of light, shade, and buildings than any picture of Albano I ever saw."

The last phrase explains Walpole's delight. The scene was like a solidified picture, frame and all, and a picture of something classical in Italy.

But this magnificent place proved to be almost too much for poor humanity to live up to. "I should die of gout," moans poor Walpole at the end of his visit, "if I was to be Polonius to a Princess for another week. Twice a day we made a pilgrimage to almost every heathen temple in that province that they call a garden; and there is no sallying out of the house without descending a flight of steps as high as St. Paul's. It is charming at twenty to play at Elysian fields, but it is no joke at fifty, or too great a joke. It made me laugh as we were descending the great flight of steps from the house to go and sup in the grotto on the banks of Helicon; we were so cloaked up, for the evening was very cold, and so many of us were limping and hobbling, that Charon would easily have believed we were going to ferry over in earnest."



When such elaborate standards as those of Stowe were the vogue it was not surprising that mere Nature, unimproved by art, should be disappointing. "The road from Buxton to Disley," notes the travelled Grimston, "the most dreary, mountainous and disagreeable, the country around entirely uncultivated and moorish, the prospects exceedingly romantic." The famous coast road of Wales, beloved by the present seeker after beauty, he had also traversed: "the entire road [from Aberayron to Aberystwith] is by the side of the sea, which shews a dreary prospect on one side, and the uncultivated mountains equally so on the other; no tree to break the unbounded view, no shrub to beautify the unlimited range of mountains."

One gathers that spaciousness is bad; vast expanses ought to be speckled with something; Grimston approved of the sea-view from Scarborough, because it was always covered with numbers of little vessels. Walpole had the same sentiment. He was thankful that one nowadays heard "less of what delighted our sportsman ancestors, *fine open country*. Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, and such ocean-like extents were formerly preferred to the rich blue prospects of Kent, to the Thames-watered views in Berkshire, and to the magnificent scale of nature in Yorkshire. An open country is but the canvas on which a landscape might be designed." In the same way, waterfalls should not be too high, those near Festiniog "fall under the denomination of cataracts, and are works of nature

which rather strike with horror than please the imagination by their tremendous appearance."

Just once, however, the orthodox classifications fail the honest Viscount, and he cannot help liking something which is manifestly wrong. With true moral courage he sets it down against himself: among the wood walks of Lord Bathurst's park at Cirencester "the variety of avenues and the almost unlimited prospect you have through, although not modern taste, yet so entirely engages the attention with the unbounded view, that though perhaps it may not create ideas of beauty it must of grandeur and magnificence."

In the end, Lord Grimston finds that his tour has only strengthened the opinion he held before setting out, "that, though each county may boast of its own particular excellencies, yet, considered in the whole, none can exceed the beauty, or be preferred to that regular uniformity, which is to be met with in every part of Hertfordshire."

This devotion to a regular uniformity Horace Walpole was doing something to disturb not only by the construction of his darling Strawberry, but by constant exposition. In the domain of taste he possessed that definite certainty, and expressed that masterful judgement which was so evidently lacking to him in the domain of politics. He had a true love for true nature, as she is seen in English trees and hills: our landscapes, he maintains, actually excel the painted picture in one chief respect, the verdure of the turf, which is beyond the painter's art.

“Neatness and greenth are so essential in my opinion to the country, that in France, where I see nothing but chalk and dirty peasants, I seem in a terrestrial purgatory that is neither town nor country. The face of England is so beautiful, that I do not believe Tempe or Arcadia were half so rural; for both, lying in hot climates, must have wanted the turf of our lawns.”

Not that Walpole did not subscribe to the correct canons of taste in set pieces: “Without doors all is pleasing,” he writes of Wentworth Castle: “there is a beautiful artificial river, with a fine semicircular wood overlooking it, and the Temple of Tivoli placed happily on a rising towards the end. There are obelisks, columns, and other buildings, and, above all, a handsome castle in the true style, on a rude mountain, with a court and towers: in the castle-yard, a statue of the late lord who built it.”

As to Sir George Lyttelton’s place at Hagley, Walpole beats Lord Grimston in his ecstasies. “If I was to say anything of the park,” noted the solemn Viscount, “it should be that nature has been lavish of her gifts in it, that Lord Lyttelton had improved those gifts, and that Hagley was as nearly perfect as is consistent with an earthly situation.”

“It is a hill of three miles,” explains Walpole, “but broke into all manner of beauty; such lawns, such woods, rills, cascades, and a thickness of verdure quite to the summit of the hill, and commanding such a vale of towns, and meadows, and

woods extending quite to the Black Mountain in Wales, that I quite forgot my favourite Thames!" In this park, we learn, there was every evidence of extreme taste, and "not one absurdity. There is a ruined castle, built by Miller, that would get him his freedom even of Strawberry: it has the true rust of the Barons' Wars." There was "a scene of a small lake . . . Parnassus . . . circular temple . . . fairy dale . . . cascades gushing out of rocks . . . a hermitage—exactly like those in Sadeler's prints," and, finally, a well "like the Samaritan woman's in a picture of Niccolò Pous-sin!" And so we find ourselves once more at the fount and authority of the picturesque, the painted picture.

It is really a little difficult to see by what rules propriety or absurdity are distinguishable. In a less enthusiastic temper, Walpole jibes at the prevalent fondness for "the hermitage or scene adapted to contemplation." This was a sort of cabin, surrounded by greenery or rockery contrived to look as savage as possible, and was an indispensable fitting of the orthodox landscape garden. Specimens may still be found as relics of the grand taste, for a more prosaic generation often made use of them as ice-houses. Yet, objects Walpole, "It is almost comic to set aside a quarter of one's garden to be melancholy in."

Again, it is decreed to be absurd to leave temples standing in cornfields, or obelisks in the middle of a bowling green, like Lord Rockingham, or to allow a public road between high hedges to traverse

one's park: but it is not absurd to erect a gateway upon the summit of an open hill, or to build sham ruins on the crest of an embankment. Mock forts, with fictitious batteries on them, are, however, condemned, as well as "a handful of Scotch firs, that look like ploughboys dressed in old family liveries for a public day!" Lord Grimston had been much impressed by this same pseudo-fort with its battery of great guns on a rampart, as well as by the plantation, but then Grimston had passed over the Newstead building as merely a house "of very old date and carries the appearance of an abbey," whereas Walpole rejoices in detail over hall, refectory, cloister, chapel, and great east window.

The strange truth was that Walpole had conceived an affection for the pointed arch and jagged battlements of mediaeval antiquity. He had, so to speak, adopted for his own the *Gothic* period, and loved the look of it, real or sham. His affections were strictly limited to the "Gothic" and the classical. Haddon Hall, for instance, is condemned *in toto* as "not Gothic but of that betweenity that intervened when Gothic declined and Palladian was creeping in—rather, this is totally naked of either." His novel fancy became a fashion and he appears therefore in the world of culture as the prophet of "Gothic," a word he at first uses in a bantering manner, as if laughing at himself for some childish fancy, since the term still conveyed the distinctly condemnatory meaning attached to it a century earlier ("the Church, though Gothic, is

full of carving," had been Evelyn's comment on one of the most glorious of French cathedrals). But thanks to Horry "Gothic" attained to the improved connotation of *quaint* and so in the end became as serious and distinctive a term to him as it now is to us.

At Walpole's favourite home, Strawberry Hill, he demonstrated in visible form what were his "Gothic" ideals and the extent of his mediaeval learning.

But Strawberry Hill demands a brief history. Its origin, like that of the great Louvre itself, was modestly private, but it grew out of knowledge nearly as fast as Jack's Beanstalk. At first the cottage of a retired coachman, and by his jeering neighbours nicknamed *Chopped Straw Hall*, it developed into, first, the villa of a well-known merchant in *bric-à-brac*, next, the suburban box of Horace Walpole—then his country seat—his Gothic Castle—one of the sights of the county which even royalty sent its royal visitors to see.

Walpole, delighted by the magnificent view the little house commanded, had acquired it in 1747, two years after his father's death, when he gave up a small house in the precincts of Windsor Castle, his philosopher's "tub upon Windsor hill," alluded to by Gray.

The desire of well-to-do people to have a country "box" to escape to from the noise and smells of London had already set a fashion. The preference of George II for Kensington and of George III for Richmond stimulated it, and



the more elaborate the life of London society became, the more prompt were its votaries to escape from it—not into true rural quietness, for this each decade found them less and less disposed—but into pure air and a pseudo-rurality which might exonerate them from attending to anything they disliked and give scope for lighter and less costly amusements than those of town.

White's Club even took a house at Richmond, to "come to every Saturday and Sunday to play at whisk, you will naturally ask why they can't play at whisk in London on these two days as well as on the other five; indeed, I can't tell you, except that it is so established a fashion to go out of town at the end of the week, that people do go, though it be only into another town." *Whisk*, of course, is the earlier name of whist.

Horace Walpole was one of the earlier colonists. "The house is so small," he writes, "that I can send it you in a letter to look at: the prospect is as delightful as possible, commanding the river, the town, and Richmond Park." It must be remembered that towns were then less smoky, while their spires and towers and bridges sprang more vigorously to view from the midst of surroundings built on a much smaller scale than those which now swamp most of the effect of fine architecture. "Two delightful roads, that you would call dusty, supply me continually with coaches and chaises: barges as solemn as Barons of the Exchequer move under my window; Richmond Hill and Ham Walks bound my prospect; but, thank God! the Thames is between

me and the Duchess of Queensberry. . . ." This was in accordance with his own dictum that "Prospect, animated prospect, is the theatre that will always be the most frequented." He had also, he adds, about land enough to keep such a farm as Noah's when he set up in the Ark with a pair of each kind, but Walpole's couple of cows and his Turkish sheep were selected for the sake of their colours—"for becoming the view."

But the little house proved (as usual) too little for the man of fashion. He possessed already a great quantity of books and pictures which must be housed, and he was for ever adding to his treasures, which he would not stow away in hiding but liked to enjoy on the walls or tables of his home. At the end of six years, his library and great parlour being completed, he thought he had finished his building: "it was a neat little house, it now will be a comfortable one, and, except one fine apartment, does not deviate from its simplicity." But he miscalculated his own zest for creation; a gallery followed, then a round tower with battlements, a great cloister, a pseudo-oratory, a great north bed-chamber, a cabinet to hold more pictures, and finally a second tower with a hexagon room in it. In fact, for the rest of his life the building, adorning, and fitting up of "Strawberry Hill"—he had found the name in some old lease and revived it with glee—became his prime business in life. In his "gingerbread castle," as posterity unkindly termed it, he stored fine old furniture, prints and miniatures of real worth, relics and ornaments sometimes of



neither worth nor beauty, for people used to bestow all manner of curiosities upon him, till the place became famous as a veritable museum of art treasures, antiquities and funny *bric-à-brac*.

Of course he extended his grounds too, planted more trees—they must have grown into a dense thicket—and set up among them an improvement upon the orthodox “hermitage” in the shape of an imitation chapel, copied from an ancient chantry-tomb. Here in the damp, besides other treasures, he hung up four ancient portraits, once the outer panels of an altar-piece at St. Edmundsbury, sawn by this tasteful antiquarian into four pictures, and here was placed the stained glass window containing the portrait of King Henry III, reft from the church of Bexhill.

Of the pictures and curiosities which he thought of value or interest he made careful catalogues, intended to instruct his heirs in their history, “the genealogy of objects of virtù” being “not so noble as those of the peerage but on a par with those of racehorses. In all three, especially the pedigrees of peers and rarities, the line is often continued by many insignificant names,” and he liked to think that his own would figure in many future lists.

Unhappily the building of mock-antique led directly to the pilfering and pulling to pieces of the real antique, in order that fragments of ancients torn from their native historic setting might be brought to litter the museum of the man of taste. In this fashion of vulgar robbery, still so terribly

prevalent among the half-educated wealthy, Horace Walpole occupies a sad and bad pre-eminence.

It was obvious enough that if Gloucester Cathedral were being re-paved, or the ancient kitchen of St. Stephen's at Caen being destroyed, the beautiful old materials would be considered as somebody's perquisite, and would be for sale, and little fault could be found in a connoisseur who tipped a sexton, or got a friend to enter into solemn communications with the Caen canons, and thus secured a number of heraldic tiles for his modern house. "Tiles from the kitchen of William the Conqueror" was what he metamorphosed his Caen spoils into.

Still, all the world over, it is the purchaser of the stolen goods who makes the thief, nor was it only with money that the selfish rich went to work. Great men were difficult to refuse—a Harcourt close to Oxford and a Selwyn close to Gloucester had only to beg and to obtain an ancient monument from the authorities. Selwyn had got the old gateway of Llanthony Priory, "to erect on the top of his mountain, and it will have a charming effect."

Walpole himself begged too, statues from Lichfield Cathedral, painted glass from all and any of his friends. Old stained glass was, unhappily, his craze. He purchased it from abroad, and at home his friends knew it to be the best prized gift they could offer. Glass windows, like furniture, had long been among the portable objects of commerce, and the wonder is that any church has kept till to-day a few fragments of its ancient glories, not that it

has lost them. The first Lord Grimston, who let Layer Marney fall to pieces, sold a fine window from the house for "only £100." Little wonder if poverty stricken clergy and churchwardens made money, perhaps for repairs or charity, out of the beauties of their church, nor, in days when the patron regarded the church as his own property, and when lay rectors, whether indebted absentees or borough corporations, would blow up half a church with gunpowder to avoid the charge of repairing it, was it remarkable if the patron—or the Chapter—or the Corporation—paid a compliment to a well-known virtuoso by making him a present of what he evidently coveted. When Walpole asked to have *a copy* made of the ancient window of Henry III and his Queen in Bexhill Church, he was perhaps not over-surprised to find that in the end Lord Ashburnham made him a present of the original.

The charge which lies heaviest against Horace Walpole and his imitators, from George Selwyn to the latest over-seas millionaire, is that they bribed those whose position made it difficult for them to refuse, into parting with treasures which were in reality theirs only in trust, and thus tore from the nation pieces of ancient art with the easy assumption that the possession of monetary wealth by a greedy individual entitles him to snatch from the ignorant the wealth which is in truth not conformable to a monetary standard.

One might be grateful to Horace Walpole for his efforts to acquire and preserve ancient manu-

scripts, but that even in this sphere his zeal was untempered by modesty. He could not read the ancient scripts, and he could not understand antique phraseology, indignant though he was with the Society of Antiquaries for hinting a doubt of the exactness of his knowledge, yet, when the Conways allowed him to carry off the whole of their misused family archives, he undertook to print what he thought "curious"—and remarkably little, alas, did he judge to be so—and to burn what was useless.

Accordingly, a multitude of bills, bonds, rent-rolls, and the like, valuable private memoranda of the seventeenth century or earlier, were consigned wholesale to the flames by this arrogant critic.

Such callousness before real antiquity, like his admiration for mock ruins, seems puzzling in a man who was stirred almost to poetry by the sight of Newark or of Pomfret, and who was hardly for a moment deceived by the literary forgeries of "Ossian" Macpherson or Chatterton. Probably if these had openly boasted of their works as imitations, Walpole might have admired the dexterity, but they attempted to dupe the public, and that was an insult to the artistic knowledge of the public—and the critics.

Yet it is only fair to draw a distinction between the serious and the entertaining study of history and antiquity. Walpole was an artist and an antiquarian, but he remained a gentleman; he approved only of the best period of Gothic; he had no interest in real history, only in its gossip; he could

despise the "Saxon uncouthnesses" of the east window of Ely Cathedral; on the other hand, he made no claim to have reached a learned correctness in his own fantastic "Gothic Castle," although, as a matter of fact, he believed it perfect. He was a little vexed by the lack of appreciation shown by his French visitors, whose familiarity with the authentic *châteaux* of their own country hardly permitted them to "taste" the lath and plaster-like erections of Strawberry, with its great parlour "hung with paper in imitation of stucco," and its entrance hall got up like an oratory and intentionally kept dark, because taste required the entrance to be pervaded by dignified gloom, presumably as a preparation for the brilliant surprises beyond. A religious twilight was shed upon it, o' nights, from a "gothic lanthorn of tin japanned," filled with stained glass by the versatile Mr. Bentley and hung in the well of the stairs.

The whole place was but a big plaything, and Horace Walpole knew it; "I do not mean to defend by argument," he said, "a small, capricious house. It was built to please my own taste, and in some degree to realize my own visions."

#### IV ON THE ROAD

EVER since the accession of William III, and more markedly since that of the House of Hanover, the concentration of social and political interests in London had steadily widened the cleavage between the inhabitants of the capital and those of the rest of England. Indeed, the insidious destruction of the independence of parliament at its root, the freedom of election, under the Whig *régime*, almost absolved crown and ministers from any necessity of considering "the provinces" at all, provided the great men of each locality were satisfied.

Those grandees were falling more and more out of touch with the people of the counties which they professed to lead. The more splendid a Woburn, a Stowe, or a Knole became, the further did the masters of these palaces soar above the ken of their country neighbours.

Nor could the Universities bridge the gulf. Oxford and Cambridge trained parsons and country squires and bowed deferentially before titled youths who might take degrees without examination, and occupied the lofty position of patrons towards such learned elders as had the good luck





STRAWBERRY HILL  
FROM A DRAWING BY PAUL SANDBY, R.A.





to be allowed to wait upon them in the name of the classics.

To the noble, the fashionable and the political, the world of London alone counted for anything, and to that centre must all betake themselves whose business or hopes depended upon patronage. It is one of the characteristics of eighteenth-century literature that, as a whole, it is a literature of London; the exceptions, though famous, are few.

The development of the London *season*, the coming up to town, for the sake of pleasure, of all the world who could afford to do so, was also accomplished in that age, the age *par excellence* of wealth without responsibilities or fears (that is to say—as of the rest of these remarks—during the first eighty years of the century). And about the middle of the eighteenth century is to be observed, what at first sight seems to be inconsistent with this supremacy of London, yet is not really so, a very great development of the travelling habit. Perhaps the fiasco of the Forty-five had discovered to all England the remarkable security of the country.

Certainly that “Pleasure never is at home” is an anciently and widely accepted belief, and by the middle of the eighteenth century there were great numbers of people in England with enough superfluous wealth to warrant them in looking about for pleasure: an effect of the long Walpolian peace. The more arduous grew the claims of society and the chains of refined manners and expensive fashions,

the more desirable it must have seemed to slip the leash sometimes.

And there was another powerful motive: health. It was beginning to be rather fashionable to have a health which must be taken care of. Possibly the growth of population, and especially of the manufacturing towns, made the conditions of life really less sanitary; perhaps with increased ease the standard of health had risen; perhaps the rapid advance made in medicine and surgery in the earlier half of the century combined with the spread of that scourge of the age, the gout, to stimulate a definite search for cures, which were found, very appropriately, in drinking waters.

The gout, a very grave social and political phenomenon, is often, and with some apparent justice, set down to the credit of our Portuguese commerce and the potent wines it induced our ancestors to drink; certainly the growth of intemperance kept pace with the growth of wealth.

The water-cure, however, had long been popular enough on the continent, and now that roads were being so greatly improved it was not difficult for English springs to acquire a more than local reputation and attract custom and fashion from a distance. London itself was full of Spas or water-drinkers' gardens, while for more serious usage recourse was had to the Bath waters, Tonbridge waters, Cheltenham, Clifton, Buxton, Matlock, Harrogate, and all manner of other waters, which throughout the century were increasing in vogue.

Not much money could be spent, or taken, over

the mere drinking of water, but where there were springs soon arose all manner of attractions for the diversion of the invalids and their healthy companions. Nor did it require great perspicacity to discover that pleasant exercise in fresh air and in good humour was at least as stimulating to good health as drinking water. The royal family in the days of George II were so remarkably addicted to taking exercise, walking especially, that they set a fashion in that respect, much to the delight of the eminent Dr. Meade.

Quickly, then, did it become a fashion to leave home every few years for a visit to a "watering place," and the experiment of drinking sea-water, though it did not succeed in establishing itself, doubtless led to the popularizing of the remarkable advantages of bathing in it, and the discovery of the properties of sea-side air. The warm bath had been a medical remedy from the earliest ages; it was reserved for the doctors of the eighteenth century to invent the cold bath as another. It remained for a great while only a remedy. Lord George Sackville, writing from the magnificence of Knole to invite his friends the Irwins to stay with him, tells the General, "I am sorry Mrs. Irwin requires the cold bath, and particularly as we have not the least convenience of that sort here: so that she had better send her bathing tub by the waggon."

The sea-bath was a natural development from the cold bath, and for long continued to be treated as a cure, necessitating careful doses beforehand, especially for unfortunate youth. The examples of

George III and his eldest son were to give great impetus to the resort to the south coast, where Brighthelmstone had already obtained some celebrity before 1760. But the typical refuge for rank and fashion in the eighteenth century was, of course, The Bath.

Bath it would be impossible to describe in brief, and superfluous, since the noblest pens have traced its portrait. By 1750 it had become the principal health resort of the polite English world. Persons of fashion were building themselves houses in the Circus, or the Crescent. The Chandois buildings were completing. The day of Beau Nash was nearly over, but Dr. Oliver (of the biscuits) was still the regnant physician, aided by a small army of apothecaries who achieved much success in their treatment of gouty, worried, or imaginary invalids, from princesses and premiers to a Sir Walter Elliot.

It then took two days to reach Bath from town, though soon after the accession of George III the improvement in the roads enabled the flying coaches to do the journey in one. The daily postal service was safe and punctual, except upon a Friday, which was a kind of early closing day in Bath, and had no post out, probably because of the sabbatical suspension in London. It followed that the inns along the main west roads were approaching to a standard of perfection.

Of these the most famous was the Castle at Marlborough, novel as a hostelry, but by no means new itself. It had been a noble seat of the Seymours, and still commanded a part of their fine

grounds, woodland, and water, with the old "mount" in the garden from which to survey the prospect. John Evelyn, who visited the place in its glory, declares that the winding path up this mount was half a mile long. What would "the proud duke" of Somerset have said, asked society, could he have learned that his grand-daughter would let his family house for an inn? Society shuddered to imagine, whispered its disgust at the heiress's husband, Sir Hugh Smithson, who had actually left some of the old pictures hanging up in the bedrooms, and the moment the new inn was opened (in 1751), flocked to lodge in those hitherto haughtily secluded apartments. "A prodigious large house, and furnished inn-like, two beds in each room; but as the furniture is new and mostly washing, it looks spruce and clean," reported Lady Vere to Lady Suffolk.

The only person who did not like The Bath appears to have been Horace Walpole, who was bidden, after a severe attack of gout, to "go to ask the Bath waters what it is, and where they would please to have it settle." He was disappointed in the place: "Their new buildings, that are so admired, look like a collection of little hospitals; the rest is detestable; and all crammed together, and surrounded with perpendicular hills that have no beauty." Moreover, it was full of Ministers, Chancellors, lords and ladies, dukes and duchesses, "in short, it is living in a fair." So he stayed but three weeks and found it a century; the mountains, he complained, ran against his nose, he could not stir out of the town without clambering; he honestly

confessed that it was healthy, that one could live as retired as one pleased in spite of the fashionable throng, that everything was cheap, "and the provisions better than ever I tasted." Still, he had taken an insuperable aversion to it, and felt that it was sure of doing him good, from the great care he henceforth would take of himself for fear of being sent thither again.

The health resorts known to the fashionable lay in the south, for England still fell naturally into the threefold division of Shakespeare's Hotspur, and west of the Severn or north of the Trent the traveller found himself in an unknown country. It was not so much the Trent as the dismal moorlands beyond it which shut off the northern counties from southern knowledge, and made Lord Grimston feel himself a man of enterprise for venturing to invade them.

When, however, he had safely traversed those terrible Derbyshire roads, he was rather surprised to find that Yorkshire possessed a civilization of its own. York, a city of handsome streets full of good houses, was in fact the capital of a large district from every part of which company gathered to it, "as to London," for the winter season, when all kinds of amusements were maintained among them. York Assembly Rooms, designed by the great Palladio himself, with forty-four Corinthian columns and forty-four glass chandeliers, were reckoned the most magnificent in England.

The county could boast its splendid mansions, too; its great parks, adorned with Ionic temples



and Corinthian cupolas, and its own watering-places, Harrogate, for instance, "situate on the moor, in itself very disagreeable, but for its waters much resorted to by company, to entertain which there are several public houses, most of which are pretty good." Or better still, there was Scarborough, described (in 1768) as "a dirty, ill-built and very bad paved town, its situation pleasant by being so near the sea." Scarborough was "much resorted to by company for the benefit of bathing in the sea, which in many cases is recommended. They provide lodgings for themselves in the town, and generally meet once a day at some kind of diversion either at the rooms or the play-house, which is a very good one, or at the billiard table. These amusements, and the pleasure of seeing company induces many to come, who are not really in want of the water. This place is famous for its healthy air, and the many noble prospects that the hills around afford; the sea on one side almost always covered with small vessels, the castle and the town on the other, and in front the richest country contribute to make it a most pleasing spot."

The clients for these and other northern watering-places were furnished by the rapidly growing manufacturing towns:—"The town of Leeds is very large and populous, but exceedingly dirty, ill built and as badly paved"; nevertheless its clothiers had built by subscription, for the convenience of vending, "a very spacious hall round a court." Barnsley is "a very bad, dirty town, but yet is con-

siderable by having a wire manufactory in it"; "Thirsk, large but ill built and as ill paved"; Wakefield "not remarkable"; Sheffield "very large and populous, but exceedingly dirty and ill-paved. What makes it more disagreeable is the excessive smoke from the great multitude of forges which this town is crowded with," but which kept "most of the inhabitants in employment." "One of the foulest towns in England," corroborates Walpole, "in the most charming situation."

It is quite a relief to learn that Lord Grimston's cleanly eye was pleased by Ripon, by Burton, and by Derby, which he thought a handsome town, adorned by good county buildings and regular streets of well-built houses. Manchester, too, was "very handsome, full of good houses, well paved, and carries on a great trade, particularly of tapes," here the Duke of Bridgwater's marvellous canal was the principal sight and a good toast to drink to after dinner. On the Viscount's homeward way he went through Coventry, a place which by reason of the antiquity of its buildings, made but a mean appearance; Birmingham, however, was already "a very extensive and populous town, well paved, and in the upper part many good houses belonging to the principal inhabitants." There were three good churches and many meeting houses besides. Its steel work, silver-plating and manufactories of buttons and buckles, guns, knives and scissors, maintained this opulence, and one of its magnates, a Mr. Taylor, used to do the honours of his great manufactory to strangers as politely as any lord

showing off his park, and dwelt in a large house "which made an elegant appearance."

Bristol, the first of English seaports, almost enraptured the practical Viscount with its wealth, its harbour, its quays—"The dirtiest great shop I ever saw," sneered the more fastidious Walpole.

Oxford was, of course, a show place, but not a place to stay in. The beauty of old St. Giles's did not appeal to Lord Grimston, who regretted that as he entered it by the Banbury road, past Balliol College, "we did not at first receive that noble impression which a sudden view of the High Street generally gives to strangers." He remembers to note that the Ashmolean "is elegant on account of its symmetry," and thinks that the Radcliffe Library standing "on arcades which are circularly disposed, enclosing a spacious dome, . . . may boast of being a complete pattern of elegance." "The genius of the two Universities," he adds, "is much the same, except that Oxford prides itself rather more in its independency and glory in not giving way to a compliancy with the measures of a court."

This antique toryism, then a mark of independence, may have been accountable for the antiquity of manners in Oxford. Horace Walpole, who declared that, for its beauty, he would have liked to live there, did not find it very comfortable to stay in, and hurried away: "all I will tell you more of Oxford is, that Fashion has so far prevailed over her collegiate sister, Custom, that they have altered the hour of dinner from twelve to one. Does it not

put one in mind of reformations in religion?" Society was then dining at four o'clock; and did nothing afterwards but drink, gamble, or gossip.

Travel along the Great North Road, or the Watling Street highway, or over the main routes to Bath and Bristol, or Dover, or Southampton, was safe and comfortable enough, as a rule. But the good condition of a road meant that some great man, or some active Corporation, had procured a special "Highway Act" to levy rates for its upkeep in the particular district, Bills which were frequently voted on as party, that is, personal, questions and might or might not be passed. Country roads were still sometimes very ill kept; even between two such towns as Coventry and Birmingham the way might be almost impassable; Northamptonshire—"a clay-pudding stuck full of villages," as Walpole termed it—and Sussex were both notorious for miry roads, where it was quite common to lose a wheel or break an axle in a hole, or to get stuck fast in a quagmire, and Lord Chat-ham, in Dorset, felt his nerve completely shaken by recollecting a precipice his wife's chaise must descend.

It was only in out-of-the-way places that inns could not make travellers comfortable, and Horace Walpole's experience at Wellingborough was certainly unusual. The travellers were there accommodated in "a vast bedchamber," reeking so horribly of tobacco that it appeared to be used as a club room. "I desired some boiling water for tea,

they brought me a sugar-dish of hot water in a pewter plate."

Horace Walpole, however, travelled in his own coach with plenty of servants, and, as a rule, made his way from one country house to another; more ordinary people frequently rode on horseback, and might meet with lively adventure in a small way.

Even pragmatic Dr. Young could write amusingly when a journey furnished the incidents; perhaps his one entertaining epistle to his duchess recounts the chances of his ride home to Wellwyn from Bulstrode in 1745. "... My man was ill of a fever; therefore, when we came to St. Albans, he desired I would stop a minute, that he might take something, being ill; and as he said he thought his blood was much inflamed, I stopped, and left him the liberty of having what he pleased; on which he drank half a pint of hot brandy, then we put on apace, & by the time we had rid four miles, his horse stumbled, though it was the rider drank the brandy. On the jolt Tom waked, and cried, 'Sir, I have dropped the bag!' I was in a passion at his negligence, and told him I should then have nothing for dinner. 'No, Sir,' says he, with great joy, 'the venison is here; I only have dropped your leather bags.' Now, Madam, in those bags was nought but my shirts, wigs, shoes, razors, &c.; in short my whole travelling estate. On being a little disgusted even at that loss, he told me to be sure somebody must pick it up, & no doubt would bring it after us; & then trotted on with great tranquillity of mind. Whilst I was consider-

ing how I should best manage the handle of my whip to knock him off his horse, & leave him to be picked up by the next comer, with my bags, a servant from my, and your Grace's, honest landlord at the Red Lion overtook me with what was lost; which was left on a horse-block in his inn-yard. Now judge, Madam, if I stand in need of highlanders in order to be undone. How long it may be before they strip me of my shirt, which I so happily recovered, Heaven only knows."

Of highwaymen not very much is to be heard in the middle of the eighteenth century, except near the exits of London, such as Hounslow Heath. The highway robbers were not distinguishable in kind from common thieves, and are probably very justly described in the famous "Beggars' Opera." A display of resistance usually sent them packing, and where they succeeded there was probably some connivance by servants or ostlers, nor were they usually violent.

When Horace Walpole was attacked, in 1749, and was nearly shot through the head, the explosion of the robber's pistol was accidental, and when the thief was afterwards caught he declared in fine style that if the pistol had shot Mr. Walpole he had another for himself. He was one M'Lean, a robber of so much notoriety that to see him in gaol became the fashion, and the public could hardly be supplied fast enough with prints of his portrait and pamphlets of his life.

It may seem strange that as time went on, that is, as the practical effects of George III's system



of government began to be felt in the general neglect of duty and slackness of control, robbery and all kinds of violence increased rapidly. In the 'seventies and 'eighties highwaymen were attacking people in broad daylight; Lord North, the Prime Minister, was stopped, robbed and wounded, in 1782. Communication between neighbouring villages just outside London became actually dangerous for single or unarmed persons, if they were known to be people of means, and ladies were shy of paying visits unless they could go with a troop of armed servants.

Horace Walpole vowed that he comforted himself with "the Gothicity of the times. Is it not delightful not to dare to stir out of one's own castle but armed for battle?" His foreign guests were afraid to come to breakfast with him: "So it is an ill highwayman that blows nobody good. In truth it would be impossible in this region to amass a set of company for dinner to meet them. The Hertfords, Lady Holderness, and Lady Mary Coke did dine here on Thursday, but were armed as if going to Gibraltar; and Lady Cecilia Johnstone would not venture even from Petersham—for in the town of Richmond they rob even before dusk—to such perfection are all the arts brought! Who would have thought that the war with America would make it impossible to stir from one village to another? Yet so it literally is. The colonies took off all our commodities down to highwaymen. Now being forced to mew and then turn them out like pheasants, the roads are stocked with them,



and they are so tame that they come even into houses."

The climax was the stopping of the government mail from France (in 1786) in the middle of Pall Mall within hail of the guard at St. James's, and the abstraction of the entire contents, despatches and all. Things did not begin to improve until the war with France, either because this opened a fresh vent to superfluous vigour, or because the presence of press-gangs and the military made London suburbs less hospitable for the thieves.

The wave of English holiday-makers, most of them possessed of ample means and long leisure, often travelled beyond our own country both to west and east, for, except during the years of war with France, an acquaintance with Paris was part of the necessary education of the gentleman, while on the other side Ireland provided a sphere for two rather different types of migrant: those who were partakers in the Whig Government, including their private hangers-on, all hoping, and seldom in vain, for profitable opportunities, and those who for reasons of finance, or maybe of chagrin, found it convenient to absent themselves from London for a while and enjoy the cheapness and the famous hospitality of Irish society. The separate government and Church of Ireland furnished a number of lucrative offices, shared among the local wealthy and noble families and the nominees of the government in London for the time being. The king always insisted on conferring an Irish peerage as the preliminary to an English title. The Irish Exchequer

could be loaded with pensions, frequently of the nature of consolation prizes for ministerial *protégés* or failures, with much less difficulty than the English revenue.

The amenities of Irish country life in the middle of the century have been cheerfully painted in the letters of Mrs. Pendarves (the Mrs. Delany of the Duchess of Portland) and considerably later than her descriptions a letter from Bishop Hotham of Clogher proves that the old-fashioned style reminiscent of Sir Roger de Coverley was not yet extinct. Dr. Hotham was a *protégé* of Lord George Sackville and a steady voter in the Irish parliament, and upon visiting his episcopal seat for the first time, in the summer of 1782, he sent to his patron a sufficiently rapturous account of it:<sup>1</sup>

“I took advantage of our present parliamentary recess to run down & see what sort of a thing I had gotten. Since your Lordship was at Clogher things are greatly changed. My cathedral is now no longer a miserable but very neat and respectable parish church. It was rebuilt by Bishop Sterne, & substantially repaired and beautified by the late bishop. Bishop Sterne also built the present palace, which though not so well contrived as it might have been is far from a despicable place of residence, especially as my predecessor added two wings, the one an eating room of thirty feet by twenty, the other a library of thirty-two

<sup>1</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., 1904; Stopford Sackville Papers, i, 279.

feet by twenty-two, exclusive of the bow-window in each. The demesne is sufficiently planted, and from that circumstance, and the uncommon irregularity of the ground, in my opinion extremely beautiful. It measures 560 English acres, and the whole is surrounded by a stone wall, without a road or even a pathway through any part of the ground except for my own servants, such as park-keeper, shepherd, &c. My beef, mutton, veal, & lamb are all as good in their kinds as can be, the farm is to produce pigs, poultry, cream, and butter, hay, oats, and straw. The decoy gives me teal and wild ducks. The warren supplies me with excellent rabbits as I ever tasted; the pidgeon-house with pidgeons; the water furnishes carp, tench, trout, eels, perch and pike, the venison in the park is remarkably good, & a most extensive range of mountain, of which I have absolute dominion, yields in the proper seasons an astonishing profusion of partridge, hares, and grouse. The city of Clogher stands on my ground and the citizens are of course my tenants. The borough is at present secure and likely to continue so till the present or some future furiously patriotic and vehemently virtuous House of Commons do me the honour to inform me (as I expect will be the case next session if not sooner) that it will be better in the hands of the volunteers' than in mine. The country is healthy & fine, & the roads about me very good. The diocese is in the highest order of any in Ireland, the clergy are a most respectable body of men, many of them very learned, all

of them conscientious & exemplary, and except two or three for whom I must get houses to be built, strictly resident on their respective benefices. Finally, the income of the see is not less, as I am informed, than £4,000 per annum, which in my judgment is no trifling emolument.

“Such, my Lord, is now my situation, and with unfeigned gratitude to the Supreme Disposer of all events, and those steady & active friends with whose assistance He has blessed me in my pursuits, I may now I think sit quietly down in my retreat and enjoy in my own way for the rest of my life the very great prize I have had the good fortune to draw in the lottery of the world.

“... Methinks I hear you say ‘Content and happy? How strange a language in a man, especially a clergyman at the age of forty-seven! The case, my Lord, I will allow to be a rare one, but by the goodness of my sovereign in attending to the solicitations of the warmest & steadiest friend I ever had or can have, such *is* the case at this moment with your Lordship’s most obliged, etc.’”

Yet Hotham’s experiences of Ireland synchronized with a period of change and turmoil which, more violently than in England, if less terribly than in France, swept away the old-fashioned, leisured life of the aristocratic epoch. The insolent petty tyranny of Lord George Sackville during his father’s Lord-Lieutenancy is said by Walpole to have “first taught Ireland to think”; the mis-govern-

ment of Lord Townshend (1767) certainly opened floodgates of unrest and sedition; but the Whig system was the underlying cause.

Nor had even Dr. Hotham always been so easily contented by his own fortunate lot. His first impressions of Irish life (in 1777) had been so startling that after near a year's study of Dublin and its neighbourhood he had felt that it behoved him to send some report of its threatening gloom to his patron, Sackville, still a minister of great influence in Irish affairs.

Hotham had, very naturally, been at first somewhat repelled by the face of the country about Dublin, and told Sackville:

“The mud fences and rough stone walls, both of them unfinished at best, if not ruinous, as they generally appear to be, and the next to total absence of wood, hurt my English eye very much; nor can I reconcile myself as yet either to the excessive dirt and poverty of the natives, or the universal dejection of mind visible in the countenances of the lower sort. They are certainly cruel also, and savage in their nature, and as ignorant of all law & indeed averse from all wholesome restraint of it as the wildest Indians. They are slothful, gloomy, obstinate, & ungrateful, and neither improved by benefits, nor sensible of kindness.

“This must be understood of the peasantry, and most inferior ranks. If we consider those who stand a step higher, who have votes for members,

who serve on juries, and in short are reputed of some sort of consequence (which the peasantry here are not), I fear an account of them, if truly given, will not be very favourable. They are absurd, shortsighted, tumultuous, and corrupt; and such friends to perjury, on almost all occasions, that though no people go more to law than the Irish, I believe there is no country in the world where real justice is so seldom done by the determination of a jury.

“With regard to the lowest orders of gentry, I mean those who, calling themselves esquires, and being called so by their neighbours, live by their dog, their gun, & fishing net, or by retailing the land which they rent in the wholesale—a practise which is the bane of this Iland—I can say but little of them, not having hitherto fallen in their way; but as far as I can hear or discover, they are not a race of beings from whom much information or advantage of any kind is to be extracted, by any human chemistry.

“As to the nobility and gentry of landed property, they are of two kinds, foreigners and natives. The first are such as possess considerable property in Ireland, and enjoy it elsewhere. To these lovers of their country I have nothing to say. The last, that is the natives, live indeed in Ireland, and enjoy their possessions so thoroughly, and in a manner so truly Irish, that they generally become beggars in a few years’ time, by dint of hospitality and inadvertence. From distress of circumstances to modern patriotism, the transition is not



uncommon, but daily; indeed, one is the certain consequence of the other. Accordingly they all turn patriots, and vociferate in Parliament, where, if nature do not permit of their being able, custom I am sure does not prevent their being abusive, to an astonishing degree; and scurrility we all know is the forerunner of places, pensions, sinecures &c. &c. &c. which in this country have the singular property of gathering like snow balls, and multiplying themselves and one another *ad infinitum*.

“In short, either from the want of public virtue, or superabundance of it, in people here (I will not pretend to decide which), Ireland seems an unfortunate country. Its size, situation, soil, and climate, make no part of its misfortune; for it is peculiarly happy in them all. It suffers only by the conduct of its principals. Would but the chief people of the Iland open their eyes to its real interest, and therein their own, Ireland would be a favoured spot, but I have long said, and do maintain, that its first and greatest enemies are the men of greatest rank, property, and popularity in the country; and so long as they continue their present line of conduct, so long will Ireland infallibly continue in the state it is; namely, as my countrymen would be apt to express it, growing every day worse and worse. . . .”

The writer having thus explained the social condition of the island to an influential minister, it is characteristic of the age that neither of them seems to have paid any further attention to the matter.



It was easy to put the blame on the absentee magnates. Lord George Sackville was too busy helping the King to fling away America to spare attention for the catastrophe preparing in Ireland, for the man whom George II had cashiered was one of the favourite ministers of George III.

## V

### WAYS AND MEANS

THE edifice of magnificence and generosity, fashion, and extravagance must, after all, be based upon some solid foundation of wealth, but the attitude of the gentleman towards money and its acquisition was oddly inconsistent. He would not so far lower himself as to know anything about the city, or the East India Company, or the American colonies, or the manufactures of his own country. He looked down upon "nabobs," the governors, or great merchants who had made Indian fortunes and were the millionaires of the time. But if he could contrive to marry the daughter of a Governor of Madras or Bombay, of a Clerk of the Board of Green Cloth, or of a city banker, or to secure her for his son, he did so with eagerness.

There was a kind of "wholesale" dignity about the vastness of a great fortune which redeemed it from the associations of sordidness, but the manner of its getting was best buried in obscurity. So late as the close of the century, when the strain of the great war and Pitt's management of the Exchequer had begun to teach even politicians that finance was not to be relegated to the sphere of

unaccountable accidents, the excellent Wilberforce is found lamenting that the great minister was compelled to deal with "subjects of a low and vulgarising quality such as the excise on tobacco, wine, etc., topics almost incapable, with propriety, of an association with wit or grace. . . ." <sup>1</sup>

Somewhat similarly Horace Walpole, apprised of a conscientious and gentlemanly action on the part of a banker of repute whom he had known nearly all his life, must needs remark that it is "in a money-getting man, very extraordinary." But Walpole all his life continued to presuppose noble conduct natural to the nobility, and to be as much surprised when it proved absent as he pretended to be on discovering its existence among those of lower station.

Yet the prodigality of the great had become a fashion wherein men of rank and good parts even prided themselves on excelling. Walpole had early to regret his friend, Lord Edgcumbe, who used, with George Selwyn, to make his Christmas party at Strawberry Hill. Edgcumbe "thought nothing important that was not to be decided by dice," broke his fortune and his constitution by incessant play, late hours and excitement, and died "a martyr to gaming." Just at the same time society learned that two "great futures," Sir John Bland and Lord Montford, having run through all their money, had committed suicide, a mode of shuffling off responsibilities which became increasingly fashionable. Montford, like most of his com-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Rose, "Pitt and Napoleon," p. 9.

panions, evidently regarded the Government as bound to make provision for a gentleman. Having suddenly lost a great part of his income, he "asked immediately for the government of Virginia or the Foxhounds," and on being refused got his will drawn up, asked the lawyer whether it would hold even if he shot himself, stepped into the next room, and shot himself. In the same year died Lord Albemarle, having gambled away a sum, colossal in those days, of over £100,000, besides a handsome income, and left not a shilling for wife and child. George II pensioned the widow who had been totally pillaged by her husband, as, indeed, heiresses could easily be in those days.

A marriage with an heiress, then, was the principal mode of speculation which the dignity of rank and fashion permitted. "Don't tell me of the honeymoon," cried Lord Denbigh, on marrying a great fortune, to some polite inquirer, "it is harvest moon with me." The runaway matches to Gretna Green, which figure so often in romance, seem seldom, in real life, to have been perpetrated by the heiresses. It was more usual for the relatives of the aspirant bridegroom to conduct a treaty with the bride's guardians. Horace Walpole clearly considered that the foremost offence of his errant nephew, Lord Orford, was his ungrateful and unreasonable refusal to marry an heiress whom his uncle's interest had obtained for him. The story is typical. Young Lord Orford was eccentric, violent, and a spendthrift, hampered by his father's and grandfather's debts, and by a mother who, though enormously

wealthy, behaved very ill, detested her son, and was probably, like the young man himself, half insane. Horace and Edward Walpole were afraid that the family mansion at Houghton, and all its treasures, "relics of Sir Robert's glory," would be sacrificed to the young earl's extravagance. Mr. Chute, the friend of Horace, was acquainted with a city heiress, a Miss Nicholl, "an immense fortune of £150,000," who was to be married to Chute's ward and favourite, Mr. Whithed. But young Whithed died suddenly. Mr. Chute offered the heiress to Horace Walpole for his nephew, and, furthermore, conducted the negotiations with the lady. She was at the mercy of bad guardians, who, being themselves her next heirs, took little pains about her, even "used her inhumanly." Mr. Chute persuaded Miss Nicholl to promise to run away from the guardians and accept Lord Orford, when at this point the intended bridegroom refused to marry her, "why, nobody can guess. Thus had I placed him in a greater situation than even his grandfather hoped to bequeath to him, had retrieved all the oversights of my family, had saved Houghton and all our glory! Now, all must go." Miss Nicholl, at any rate, had a merciful escape, but that did not comfort Horace Walpole.

Not all the great heiresses fell to the dissipated, but it almost seems that success in preserving a great fortune was considered more reprehensible than squandering it. The greatest match in all England, the greatest which had "fallen," to use the phrase, for many an age, was Lady Elizabeth

Seymour, heiress both of the Seymours of Somerset and of the Percies of Northumberland. She was won by the handsome person and good address of Sir Hugh Smithson, son of a London banker, grandson, it was whispered, of a hackney-coach proprietor, and his thrifty management of her property and of his own opportunities was thenceforth the subject of many a jest: his grandfather had driven his own coaches: he paid court to Lady Yarmouth like a clodhopper: he was rebuilding the ancient Percy castles, and imagining himself a Percy: when he received the Douglas Earl of March at Alnwick, he thought fit to say "I believe, my Lord, this is the first time that ever a Douglas and a Percy met here in friendship." He was not reputed to be very generous and as he paid court to George III by being strong against Wilkes the mob had a spite against him, called him "Duke Smithson" in sarcastic ballads, and executed a comic revenge during the riots of 1768 by compelling both Duke and Duchess, with threats, to appear at the window and drink Wilkes's health, and supply beer to the crowd. The *parvenu* Duke had not the courage of the *parvenue* Duchess of Argyll, once the lovely Miss Gunning, who let the mob batter at her house till they wearied rather than illuminate at their bidding.

"Duke Smithson" was the thrifty owner of the Castle inn, and was specially odious to Horace Walpole as the owner of the disfiguring mills near Twickenham, evidently worked by the new coal and steam process, for which he had had to get a

special Act of Parliament, choking and begriming a lovely spot "to raise his rent a trifle," sneers Walpole. He is said to have avoided opposition to his private Bill from the neighbouring gentlemen by representing the mills as corn-mills, but when the Act was duly obtained they turned out to be powder mills, and justified dismay and predictions by all five blowing up one January (1772), and terrifying London like an earthquake.

Horace Walpole, in Arlington Street, was awakened by the shock and noise. "It was broad daylight, but I did not know that housebreaking might not be still improving. I cried out, 'Who is there?' Nobody answered. In less than another minute, the door rattled and shook still more robberaceously. I called again—no reply. I rung: the housemaid ran in as pale as white ashes, if you ever saw such, and cried, 'Lud! Sir, I am frightened out of my wits: there has been an earthquake.' Oh, I believed her immediately. . . . Alas! it was much worse. . . . At one came in a courier from Margaret to tell me that five powder mills had been blown up at Hounslow, at half an hour after nine this morning, had almost shook Mrs. Clive, and had broken parts or all of eight of my painted windows, besides other damage."

He hurried to his "poor shattered castle, and never did it look so Gothic in its born days. . . . Margaret sits by the waters of Babylon, and weeps Jerusalem. I shall pity those she shows the house to next summer, for her story is as long and deplorable as a chapter of casualties in Baker's *Chronicle*;



yet she was not taken quite unprepared, for one of the bantam hens crowed on Sunday morning, and the chandler's wife told her three weeks ago, when the barn was blown down, that ill-luck never comes single. She is, however, very thankful that the china room has escaped, and says God has always been the best creature in the world to her. I dare not tell her how many churches I propose to rob, to repair my losses."

When great heiresses contrived to survive their husbands they were doubly valuable, with their own wealth and their acquired titles to boot; and they seem to have been addicted to bestowing their hands upon fortune-hunters of simpler rank, who, presumably, might be dealt with upon more advantageous terms than marquises and dukes. Royalty frowned in vain; "I can't bear," growled George II, "when women of quality marry one don't know whom." Queen Charlotte was apt to try exclusion from the Drawing Room, but that only seemed to add *éclat* to the adventurous. Irish gentlemen were acknowledged to be peculiarly fortunate in carrying off such prizes, and are duly laughed at by Walpole, in his skit upon "The Giants lately discovered" [*i.e.*, in Patagonia, in 1766].

"I would by no means," he writes, "come into a project I have heard dropped . . . of bringing over a number of giants for second husbands to dowagers. Ireland is already kept in a state of humiliation. We check their trade, and do not allow them to avail themselves of the best situated harbours in the world. Matrimony is their only

branch of commerce unrestricted, and it would be a most crying injustice to clog that too." Marriage was a proceeding upon which general opinion, excluding the King's, was lenient. Not only the freaks of notable dowagers, but even the occasional rebellion of some high spirited girl against the tyranny of convention and relatives was readily condoned by the public, however scandalised the fashionable world might be. In fact, it proved impossible, except in the royal family and that only by an extraordinary Act of Parliament, to establish in England the continental system of parentally made marriages. A Duke of Richmond's daughter ran away with Henry Fox; Lady Susan Strangeways eloped with an actor—promptly endowed with a government grant in America—and, more amazing, a sister of the Marquis of Rockingham did so with a footman, dropped her title, and drew up her own marriage settlement with the most rigorous terms to the footman, as binding as any lawyer could have made it, said Lord Mansfield. It was a vigorous mode of securing independence.

Under such circumstances, the highest epithet of praise for a young woman's attitude towards marriage was "sensible." Fortunately Horace Walpole was blest by an abundance of this quality in his nieces. A young nobleman, kept by his morose father much retired and without funds, fell in love at first sight with Sir Edward Walpole's daughter Charlotte, and after some months of silent admiration one day "went and proposed himself" to her father. Sir Edward sent for his

daughter to ask her wishes. "She said very sensibly, to her elder sister, 'If I was but nineteen, I would refuse pointblank; I do not like to be married in a week to a man I never saw. But I am two-and-twenty; some people say I am handsome, some say I am not; I believe the truth is, I am likely to be large and to go off soon—it is dangerous to refuse so great a match.'" So married they were, and Lord Huntingtower became possessed of her £10,000, in return for the promise of a settlement of £1,000 a year on his father's death. "I tremble a little for the poor girl," adds the kindly uncle, "sure my brother has risked too much," and his fear was proved but too justifiable, and not solely by her pecuniary position.

Even a prudent parent might find himself tricked. "Who but must think himself happy to marry a daughter with only ten thousand pounds to a young man with five thousand pounds a year rent-charge in present, and twenty-two thousand pounds a year settled?" Such good fortune had been the lot of General Conway, who seems to have recked nothing of the loose conduct of his son-in-law Damer, or the harsh, miserly temper of Lord Milton, his father. "And yet this daughter at present is ruined!" cries Walpole, in shocked surprise. Mr. Damer and his brothers, like many other young men with large expectations, had piled up debts to the amount of £70,000, which their father, contrary to the accepted canons of propriety, refused to pay. Fortunately for poor Mrs. Damer, her contemptible husband, after a last feast



THE THREE LADIES WALDEGRAVE  
FROM THE PAINTING BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS



with low tavern companies, shot himself, and she could retreat with her jointure to her father.

In still more callous fashion did Lord Coleraine's sons reduce their mother to beggary to defray their gambling losses, while Lord Foley's actually petitioned parliament to annul their father's will, on the ground of their misfortune in having contracted debts over the card-table, the interest of which amounted to near £18,000 a year.

But the examples of senseless profusion are too many to enumerate.

Few were the heiresses who were sufficiently independent of guardians and sufficiently strong minded to be able to hesitate before proffered coronets. One such is recorded as having three times entertained the suit of noblemen only to break off later. The first, she said, never "entertained her with anything but politics, but a dry topic for courtship; the second made a horrid husband to his first wife; and the third had not sixpence in the world from his own extravagance."<sup>1</sup> This prudent lady had her reward; she finally selected the son of Lord Chancellor Camden, and duly found herself a marchioness and *Lady* Lieutenant of Ireland.

Mercenary though society might be, it was very unbusinesslike. The cleavage between classes was perhaps more absolute in the eighteenth century than in any other, and it is extremely remarkable how little the upper classes knew or cared about the rest. The fashionable talked taste then, not

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Mrs. Toynbee in note to No. 2562, vol. xiii, p. 346.

money, and were utterly ignorant of the practical life of either town or country, from which last they had become totally divorced. The sole matter of exception was hay, over which even Horace Walpole or Lord Chatham could gossip knowingly, presumably because horses interested everybody in those times.

Only once do we find Walpole making a real acquaintance with a provincial town, and quite surprised by its amenities. He was invited by his nephew to become Member of Parliament for King's Lynn, then almost a family borough and exceedingly proud of its great man, Sir Robert Walpole. Horace was obliged to make himself civil to the people of the not unimportant sea-port and describes himself as "the subject of a mob . . . addressing them in the town-hall, riding at the head of two thousand people . . . dining with above two hundred of them, amid bumpers, huzzas, songs, and tobacco, and finishing with country dancing at a ball and sixpenny whisk. I have borne it all cheerfully . . . have been to hear misses play on the harpsichord, and to see an alderman's copies of Rubens and Carlo Marat. Yet to do the folks justice, they are sensible, and reasonable, and civilised; their very language is polished since I lived among them [*i.e.*, in his youth, at Houghton]. I attribute this to their more frequent intercourse with the world and the capital, by the help of good roads and postchaises, which, if they have abridged the King's dominions, have at least tamed his subjects."



Of course Walpole knew nothing personally of any form of work. He felt a vague kindliness towards any poor person with whom circumstances brought him into contact. At his private printing press he employed in succession four printers, and was puzzled by finding them difficult to manage. Three had to be discharged for tipsiness or other faults, and the last, to whom Walpole had tried to show kindness, got into trouble on account of a woman in the neighbourhood and ran away. Walpole, like other well-meaning patrons, felt the faults of his servants so many injuries to himself and roundly generalized: "Our low people are so corrupt and such knaves, that being cheated and disappointed are all the fruits of attempting to amuse oneself or others. Literature must struggle with many difficulties. . . . Defrauded, abused, pirated—don't you think, Sir, one need have resolution? Mine is nearly exhausted."

In 1762 he experienced a strike, just as his new buildings at Strawberry were on the point of completion. "Last Saturday night my workmen took their leave, made their bow, and left me up to the knees in shavings. In short, the journeymen carpenters, like the cabinet-makers, have entered into an association not to work unless their wages are raised; and how can one complain? The poor fellows, whose all the work is, see their masters advance their prices every day, and think it reasonable to touch their share. You would be frightened at the dearness of everything; I build out of economy, for unless I do now, in two years I shall

not be able to afford it. I expect that a pint of milk will not be sold under a diamond, and then nobody can keep a cow but my Lord Clive."

The blame of distress was, of course, set down to the greed of the wicked employers, middlemen, contractors, shopkeepers, who had no right to take profits and grow rich: the wages of management and capital are as scornfully denied by Walpole as by any modern socialist:—

"Last week, when I was in town, I went to pay a bill to the glazier who fixed up the painted glass: I said, 'Mr. Palmer, you charge me seven shillings a day for your man's work: I know you give him but two shillings; and I am told that it is impossible for him to earn seven shillings a day.' 'Why no, Sir,' replied he, 'it is not that; but one must pay house-rent, and one must eat, and one must wear.' I looked at him, and he had on a blue silk waistcoat with an extremely broad gold lace. I could not help smiling. I turned round, and saw his own portrait, and his wife's, and his son's. 'And I see,' said I, 'one *must* sit for one's picture: I am very sorry that I am to contribute for all you *must* do!'"

It was doubtless this increasingly wealthy class of citizens who supported the luxury of the new public places of amusement, and "the new winter Ranelagh in Oxford Road," *i.e.*, the Pantheon, fairly amazed Walpole. "Imagine Baalbec in all its glory! the pillars are of artificial *giallo antico*. The ceilings, even of the passages, are of the most

beautiful stuccos in the best taste of grotesque. The ceilings of the ball-rooms and the panels painted like Raphael's *loggias* in the Vatican. A dome like the Pantheon, glazed. It is to cost fifty thousand pounds."

Already in 1761 Walpole had thought that extravagance had risen to its high-water mark. Since his youth everything had risen in price, and everything was adulterated, he complained. Yet during the next thirty years he watched cost, luxury, and misery intensifying almost annually.

"The nation will stare a little," he writes in 1775, "if the tension with the American colonists should really result in war. We are given up to profusion, extravagance and pleasure, heroism is not at all in fashion . . . the vivacity of the young Queen of France has reached hither. Our young ladies are covered with more plumes than any nation that has no other covering." He was acquainted with one "younger brother who literally gives a flower-woman half a guinea every morning for a bunch of roses for the nosegay in his button-hole." Perhaps his gloom might be thought the natural pessimism of an elderly man, but that there is such ample corroboration in almost all volumes of contemporary correspondence. Thus an officer returning to London from distant service, in 1771, writes to a friend still abroad: <sup>1</sup>

"Extravagance, luxury and gaming are the fashionable vices of the town and it will astonish

<sup>1</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., 1909, Various, vi, p. 313.

you on your return to see the vast improvements of the age. The Loterie, Macaroni, White's, Almac's etc. are in the most flourishing state and cards in all companies are the only things worth living for. A man of taste must play all the morning, or, at least, four or five games before dinner, which is shortened to give time for the exquisite pleasures of *Quinze* and *Vingt-un*. In fact idleness and debauchery are [*sic*] so far taken possession of all ranks in Society, that opposition to the King's measures is a piece of barbarity inconsistent with the manners of the present age. All wit is at Court, all knowledge at the gaming table."

It was true that a general and rapid rise in the prices of almost all commodities had set in before the middle of the century and continued till its close, and that wages had by no means risen in anything like proportion. The heavy taxation due to the Seven Years' War, the violent shrinkage of trade produced suddenly by the American War, and the incessant trials and taxation of the great French war were so many catastrophes to the employers of labour, and still more to the labourers.

"Since this fall of linnen and yarns," writes<sup>1</sup> an Irish clergyman from Drogheda in 1773, "a woman of the best fingers (so high is the flax and so low the yarn) cannot earn quite a penny in the day," while the weavers were almost wholly idle.

In England the distress was not at first universal, thanks to the new processes in manufactures and a

<sup>1</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., *ibid*.

great improvement in agriculture, but as the century progressed England suffered too, and the new poorhouses or Houses of Industry, as they were officially termed, provided by rates levied on unions of neighbouring parishes, were universally dubbed *Bastilles* and regarded with the utmost loathing and terror. Country gentlemen and magistrates subscribed to supply soup for the poor, usually, as appears from various recipes, made out of potatoes or rice, for a series of wet summers sent corn to famine prices, and starvation in the 'eighties and 'nineties became a frequent cause of death.

At the same time luxury in the metropolis grew no less. Noblemen competed for the best cooks—sixty guineas was no unusual wage for one. Drinking was as heavy at the close of the century as earlier. "Good-humoured" seems to have been a term equivalent to intoxicated, when a man like "honest Harry Bellenden," amiably deplored by a host of friends, feasted and drank himself to death. Walpole found it impossible to regret the decease of his brother Edward's son, though he was but a little over thirty and a young man of good parts, but "sunk into such habits of drinking and gaming that the first ruined his constitution and the latter would have ruined his father."

Semi-intoxication was no unusual sight in drawing-rooms or in the Houses of Parliament. The tears which members were so constantly shedding at their own or other orators' impassioned harangues are to be placed rather to the credit of port wine than to their chastened sensibilities. Townshend,

Fox, Pitt, and Dundas, were no more habitually sober than country squires.

It is an unpleasant side of the picture, but it ought not to be forgotten in estimating the worth of the brilliance of the eighteenth century.

People so contemptuous of business were not likely to pay more attention to that of their country than they did to their own. There was a general tendency to treat all office as a species of dilettantism, and to make it as much as possible a sinecure by appointing deputies to attend to the necessary work. The salaries for the most part were so large as to permit of this being done with profit: but the deputies, too, were appointed either out of private friendship or for hard cash, and in neither case was there much guarantee of efficiency; besides, as the deputy had no very high salary there was every temptation to him to make profits for himself, if he could, by methods more or less illicit, which, under the extremely lax modes of inspecting accounts, were often easily practised.

Patronage and perquisites were two crying evils of English government during this lavish epoch.

Every official, minister, and department had a number of places in absolute gift; no examination, no testimonial need be exacted. Lady Mary Coke tells a little tale<sup>1</sup> which shows how easily an appointment might depend upon the merest freak of a minister. She had gone, one day in 1767, to visit her sister Lady Dalkeith, wife of Charles Townshend, then Chancellor of the Exchequer; and "the Treasury

<sup>1</sup> Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke, vol. i.



was setting, and the Duke of Grafton and Mr. Townshend look'd out of the Window and invited me to come in. As I had never seen the Treasury Chamber I accepted the invitation and Lady Dalkeith went with me. They desir'd me to sit in the King's Chair . . . when I had placed myself the Chancellor of the Exchequer desired me to make a request. The favour came so unexpected that I was at a loss what to ask. . . ." But luckily she recollected a person to whom she was much obliged, for whom she had only been able to obtain "a land waiter's place at Bristol," and who had begged her to get him a better place because his family was large and he wished to give them a good education. So she wrote this man's name down, and was promised that he should have the first vacancy which occurred.

The invariable bestowal, under George III, of military and naval posts by favouritism is almost too well known to need illustration. Sometimes an edifying battle raged between two rival patrons striving to secure a place or a promotion for their respective favourites; the most exalted strife of this kind was that over the competing merits of the Keppels and the Howes, waged between personages of no less degree than William, Duke of Cumberland, and his nephew King George III, a struggle wherein the King, naturally, was able to win the ostensible victory, but in which the national voice and subsequent credit remained with the abler family of Keppel.

The public service was the last consideration



entertained. One of Sackville's correspondents holds it a laudably bold proceeding on the part of General Wall (in 1780) to name a practical man barrack master of the garrison at Gorea "in lieu of a little boy about eight years old that formerly was nominated to that office." That the neglected troops in that post were allowed no fresh meat, though it was plentiful and cheap, was regrettable but not surprising. But hints of this kind were not likely to move Sackville. His friend Governor Murray could appeal to him confidently on behalf of a nephew who must be "honourably" extricated from the West Indies by promotion to a regiment at home. This favour Sackville is to extort by means of General Amherst, in the midst of the American War. On the other hand Lord George Sackville was always able to promote his personal supporters. Irwin, a steady voter, is early promised the King's personal favour (in 1767), and duly became a general. Of his military achievements history appears to be uninformed, but "Lady George says nobody understands lace so well as General Irwin," and he was asked to lay out £50 at Paris on new ruffles for Lord George.

In the minor degrees everything rested on influence, people even asked for places as if they were objects transferable from hand to hand. Lord Clive<sup>1</sup> found himself asked for "a commission" for a friend's relative who was going to India, and gently stipulated that it was at least necessary that he should know the gentleman's

<sup>1</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., 1909, Various, vi.

name and the district in India to which he was to go. Influence descended to the minutest particulars: Lord Sandwich "expects" Captain Cornwallis (afterwards the famous Admiral) in some manner to advance a surgeon's mate who is on his ship, "because his relations at Huntingdon are my particular friends. I cannot, therefore, at their intercession, avoid recommending him to your protection."

Sandwich was notoriously brazen, venal, and partial. But a man of better standing, the Earl of Mornington, pestered poor Captain Cornwallis with personal requests. One of his sons was a middy on board, and though his lordship does not in general approve of making exceptions, and thinks it only proper that a lad should, as a rule, go through the duties of his profession, still, in this case, as Lady Mornington is crying all day, and as the climate of the West Indies is known to be unwholesome, and as his son certainly felt the heat trying before, he does desire Captain Cornwallis to send William home at once if the climate of the first West India island they touch at in the least disagrees with him. This was in 1778, in the midst of a great war. William Wellesley was promptly sent home at the first opportunity. In due course of time, but apparently without further naval experience, he became Secretary to the Admiralty.

A post might go from deputy to deputy. Lord George Sackville left the work of his own good place in the Irish government to be transacted by a man who, after long service, became too old and ill to

do it; so it went through the hands of a nephew, one Patrickson; this "third deputy is a young man of much merit," writes Sackville's informant, "perhaps it would be reasonable to give Green a pension after his 48 years service. Patrickson gives up all his time to the office, and receives at present only £50 a year."

Deputies and assistants to influential persons usually do seem to have obtained pensions, but by no means from the pockets of the wealthy sinecurists whose work they had been attending to. They were quartered on the revenues of the nation, their pensions being treated as party questions, and voted on according to the popularity of the minister concerned.

So completely had the word *pension* acquired a sinister meaning, so unheard-of was the gift of a pension for anything but a political service or a political bribe, that the acceptance of one was taken for a public acknowledgment of servility to government, and neutralized all previous merit. Dr. Johnson was frequently vilified for accepting one; Walpole, who despised Johnson for his "teeth-breaking diction" and his bad manners, allowed that he "had sense, till he changed it for words, and sold it for a pension." The acceptance of even a professorship or a canonry, being crown appointments, he considered dubious; "I know that till [Gray] did accept the Professorship from the Duke of Grafton, it was my constant belief that he would scorn any place."

The system, then, had produced the absurd re-

sult that real merit must not be provided for at all. The outcry on Pitt's acceptance of a pension is voiced by none more vehemently than by Walpole, who, as he says, had honestly believed the great minister possessed of real integrity and animated only by public duty.<sup>1</sup>

"I adored Mr. Pitt, as if I was just come from school and reading Livy's lies of Brutus and Camillus, and Fabius, and romance knows whom. Alack! Alack! Mr. Pitt loves an estate as well as my Lord Bath!"

"Pray, sir [Horry asks Montagu], how does virtue sell in Ireland now? I think for a province they have now and then given large prices. Have you a mind to know what the biggest virtue in the world is worth? If Cicero had been a Drawcansir instead of a coward . . . for how much do you think he would have sold all that reputation? . . . You are so incorrupt yourself, you would give the world Mr. Pitt was so too—you adore him for what he has done for us; you bless him for placing England at the head of Europe, . . . we owe the recovery of our affairs to him. . . . Nothing is too much for such services—accordingly I hope you will not think the barony of Chatham and 3,000 pounds a year for three lives too much for my Lady Esther. She has this pittance."

"Three thousand pounds a year for three lives [he tells Conway]. Not to Mr. Pitt—you can't

<sup>1</sup> See Nos. 782 to 786.

suppose it. Why truly not the title, but the annuity does, and Lady Hester is the baroness; that, if he should please, he may earn an earldom himself. Don't believe me, if you have not a mind. I know I did not believe those who told me. But ask the *Gazette* that swears it—ask the King, who has kissed Lady Hester—ask the City of London, who are ready to tear Mr. Pitt to pieces—ask forty people I can name, who are overjoyed at it—and then ask me again, who am mortified, and who have been the dupe of his disinterestedness. Oh, my dear Harry! I beg you on my knees, keep your virtue: do let me think there is still one man upon earth who despises money.”

That Pitt had broken his health and neglected his own interests in the service of the nation, that he had refused to take the customary perquisites of his offices, that he had come poor from a situation in which Fox had reaped a golden harvest, that he had not obtained sinecures for his family: all this could not entitle him to a provision for his wife and young children. Three thousand a year for three Pitt lives, by pension, was scandalous, though two thousand a year, in a patent office, for three Walpole lives was reasonable royal gratitude.

Walpole forgot that to despise money was possible only to men whose families could live on air—or who were provided for (like Conway and himself) by fortunes bestowed already. He was, however, scrupulously fair towards his own subordinates, and he received honest service from them. The rever-

sion of his Exchequer place was assured to Samuel Martin, that notorious member of the Court party who tried to murder Wilkes in a duel. At any news of Walpole's illness, Martin sent ostentatiously to inquire after him, and once betook himself to the deputy, Mr. Grosvenor Bedford, to inquire the real value of the office with all its perquisites. Bedford would not betray his master's confidence, and was roundly told that the moment Walpole died he should be dismissed. As little to the credit of the methods of the Court section was an attempt made by the wealthy Hollands to provide for their runaway niece, Lady Susan O'Brien, by pestering Walpole to dismiss Mr. Bedford and hand over the post to O'Brien. Walpole was a friend of the Foxes, which might make it difficult to refuse, but he defeated Lord and Lady Holland by treating them as honest persons, and assuming that they had meant to buy out Mr. Bedford. He could not possibly ask his deputy to resign the post which procured him a living, he said, but he was perfectly ready to vacate two small places held by himself "at what they should be reckoned worth fairly. They did not choose to pay the price for them. . . ."

At a time when favouritism was only equalled by servility, it was the perpetual boast of Horace Walpole that he was independent. He was never assertive of his own merits save in this one particular. Possibly it may seem to need some asserting, for he and his brothers drew the whole of their ample means from the public purse, the principal difference between their position and that of any



common place-holder being that their places had been bestowed by royal gift of George II (as patents) and were inalienable by any subsequent king or minister. They were permanent abuses.

In the eyes of Horace Walpole this made all the difference. He held his office and revenue by as lawful and hereditary a right, he declared, as any nobleman his estates and title. It was a fine thing to remember that Sir Robert Walpole had refrained from heaping up a great fortune by using his undoubted opportunities. The King had rewarded him by endowing his three sons, not with pensions, but with ancient offices to which, from time immemorial, were attached salaries or fees which the alterations of time and of money had chanced to make very valuable. The eldest son was Auditor of the Exchequer, the second, Clerk of the Pells, Horace himself, Usher of the Exchequer, besides sharing with his brother Edward a collectorship of the Customs, granted to Sir Robert for three lives, an office from which Horace drew the major share of the revenue.

Certainly during his long tenure of his places Horace Walpole always acted with probity and dignity. His income consisted partly in a fixed sum from the Customs of £1,400 a year, partly from regular commissions on certain Exchequer transactions, the profits of which had increased very greatly. The duties of the ancient office of Usher were "to shut the gates of the Exchequer and furnish paper, pens, ink, wax, sand, tape, penknives, scissors, parchment," etc., to the exchequer and treasury officials,



and to pay tradesmen's bills. This business was of course transacted by Walpole's deputy, Mr. Bedford, whom he paid, but he was himself responsible for all the payments and purchases above mentioned. The disagreeable part of his post was that though it was a place for life, and though the emoluments were certain (according to a scale drawn up in the reign of Edward III) the actual disbursement of moneys to Mr. Walpole could not be made without warrants signed by the First Lord of the Treasury, who could, if he chose, continually defer payment, and thus might exercise pressure on the votes of the Usher. Horace expressly declares that he suffered seldom in this way, although he had never once attended the levée of a First Minister: "If I have been proud, they have been just," and Lord North in particular was punctual and obliging. No one but the Duke of Bedford appears to have made a mean use of this paltry opportunity of doing mischief.

Where temptation offered was by the loophole for obtaining perquisites. A habit had been connived at of other officials obtaining goods for themselves out of the Exchequer, either for some small payment to the clerk, or as a bribe for their favour. But against this Walpole set his face, once writing a sharp letter to Mr. Bedford for permitting such an irregularity, and taking the loss resulting from the transaction on himself; he was very willing, he said, that the applicant should have the cloth he wanted, "only then I will pay for it myself." "I will have no secrets in my office." And in his

old age he was able to say: "In more than forty years I have never received a serious complaint nor given occasion to one."

"For forty good years I have made it my rule not to ask a favour of any minister, that he might not think he had a claim on my servility, or call me ungrateful if I did not accept his draft"; so he proudly wrote towards the close of his life. If he a little overstated the case, at least, on the very few occasions when he did ask a concession, or a kindness to a friend, he was convinced that he had a clear right to ask, and that he would owe nothing in return. "I have all my life missed the fairest opportunities; and am glad I have, because I should blush if I had ever owed anything to solicitation." "I choose to have no obligations but to him to whom I owed everything," *i.e.*, to his father.

At all events, he acted up to his own estimate of himself. When places and salaries were ordered to be taxed, he found the value of his Exchequer place set down as £4,100 per annum, a sum to which it had but once risen, but he made no complaint of being overrated. And when in 1783 an idea was broached of abolishing these obsolete places, Walpole wrote to Lord Shelburne to beg that his "patent" might be no obstacle to any necessary reformation, adding, "I wish my age of sixty-six and my infirmities did not reduce this tender to a very immeritorious one, for to give up what I have very little time to enjoy is no very heroic effort." He was at once assured that all

holders of places abolished would be pensioned, and it was only then that he declared his place far over-valued at £4,000 a year, and that he would refuse any such sum; £2,000 would amply content him (this was considerably under its average worth), but he would infinitely rather, he said, that instead of bestowing the overplus on himself, some provision should be made for his deputy and clerk, who would otherwise suffer severely.

All the same, this immaculately independent place-holder felt it unfair that he should suffer under the disconcerting prospect of losing the half of his income if his elder brother Edward should happen to die before him. He drew (as stated above) a considerable sum from the Collectorship of the Customs held nominally by Edward. The place having been originally bestowed for three lives, and Edward's being the last, it was not unnatural in Horace to wish that his own name, as the real receiver of almost all the profits of it, should be added to his brother's. But this would make it a place for *four* lives, and the addition of the fresh name, however reasonable in itself, was a favour asked by a man who boasted of republican sympathies, would support no ministry, and was neither courtier nor politician. Nevertheless Walpole asked twice, if not thrice, for this concession; Pelham was willing to *change* the name, but Horace was too just and punctilious to allow his brother even to be asked to consent. The Duke of Bedford (if this was the favour which Walpole asked him) refused with a roundness which kindled Wal-

pole's resentment. The Duke might have reflected, he observes, that it was but a very trifling favour he had asked, for, to be sure, had he desired anything of importance he would have addressed himself to the Duke's governess, the Duchess.

## VI

### SOCIETY IN FRANCE BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

THE spirit of change which, during the first decades of the reign of George III, was preparing such radical alteration in Ireland, and even in England, was at work yet more vehemently in France and with symptoms which puzzled English travellers.

Ever since the Great Rebellion had driven the best blood of England to take refuge in France, England had turned thither for guidance in manners and literature, and to Paris, as the home of elegance and culture, hastened, throughout the eighteenth century, our youth in training for polite manhood and our nobility on holiday. The wars of the eighteenth century merely interrupted for a few years the tide of pilgrims; indeed the Seven Years' War, ended in 1763, seemed to stimulate French curiosity about England, for a number of distinguished French made their way hither, on the score of assisting in the negotiations, to be received with every attention by delighted English hosts. The war had not been in any sense prompted by national hatreds.

In the summer of 1765 Horace Walpole con-

trived to tear himself from the charms of his Strawberry Hill and follow the prevalent fashion, or, as he expressed it, sought abroad a refuge from the annoyance of parliamentary politics, and braved the sea passage he detested so much: it was so likely to bring on the gout, and "one should look so silly to be drowned at my age." He was encouraged, he averred, by the recent invention of a "marine belt": "You buckle it on, and walk upon the sea as you would upon a grass-plot," adding with characteristic irreverence, "the discovery, to be sure, has given an ugly shock to one of our best miracles—but I give it up with Christian patience, being convinced that the art of flying will be next reduced to practice."

His first impressions of the country surprised him. Nowhere was there any sign of the strain and distress supposed in England to have been produced by the wars. Walpole thought France wonderfully enriched since he had last seen it, twenty-four years earlier. "Boulogne is grown quite a plump snug town, with a number of new houses. The worst villages are tight, and wooden shoes have disappeared. Mr. Pitt and the City of London may fancy what they will, but France will not come a-begging to the Mansion House this year or two."

Walpole only saw, of course, the route from the coast to the capital, for more than ever was Paris France, and few travellers dreamed of going further afield. He debated, indeed, whether the air of opulence might not be imputed chiefly to the

stream of English visitors. He himself might spend but ten guineas on the road, but few were so economical; the ninety-nine English whom Lord Hertford had to dinner on the King's birthday would account for a considerable expenditure.

But a more practical observer corroborates his impression of the wealth of agricultural France. William Knox was on his way to Paris almost as soon as the Peace was signed, and writes<sup>1</sup> impressively to his patron, Charles Townshend:

"I always thought England very happy in giving birth to Mr. Pitt and yourself, but I am now exceedingly thankful that neither of you are Frenchmen."

This is not, as the next passage appears to suggest, because they would, in that case, have missed their customary sport: "I have travelled two hundred miles through a cornfield in coming to this town without seeing a single acre of uncultivated ground—no rocks, no hills, no woods, nor even fences, so careful are the peasants to improve every inch of their holding, and so watchfull is the police to preserve the property of every individual from the depredations of another. The Government alone may here steal, or rather rob, with impunity." The "immensity of the tillage and the neatness of the farms" convinced Knox that the resources of the nation were ample. <sup>F</sup>France had not succumbed in the war from inherent weakness, but because her affairs were controlled by incompetent chiefs. "Do you imagine," continues

<sup>1</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., 1909, Various, vi.



Townshend's flatterer, "had Mr. Pitt or yourself been minister to the grand Monarque that England would now have enjoyed the Treaty of Paris?"

That old Louis XV had as much claim to be termed Grand Monarque as Charles Townshend to be coupled with Pitt does not affect the accuracy of Knox's observations upon the country.

His next discovery was as surprising. French society was seized with a unanimous admiration for its late enemies, the English, and had set to work to copy their fashions even more zealously than English society was studying the Parisian mode.<sup>1</sup>

"Exclusive of the Peace (writes Knox) England had certainly never more reason to be satisfied with the conduct of this Court than at present. A la mode Anglois is the bon ton throughout—English horses, English dogs, English post-chaises. Their clothes are cut in the English fashion, and roast beef is brought to the politest tables at supper." Some of the politest tables were still more complete. "The old Maréchale de Villars gave a vast dinner to the Duchess of Bedford (writes Walpole).<sup>1</sup> In the middle of the dessert, Madame de Villars called out, "Oh Jesus! they have forgot! yet I bespoke them, and I am sure they are ready; you English love hot rolls—bring the rolls. There arrived a huge dish of hot rolls, and a sauceboat of melted butter."

A passion for horse-racing, pet-dogs, and heavy

<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Bedford was negotiating for peace at Paris in 1762.

riding coats marked the lighter phases of this fashion, which was even carried so far as to induce society to quit its beloved Paris and go in the summer to visit its country houses, where occasionally spasmodic efforts were made to create in a few months an imitation of the English "landscape garden."

Walpole was carried to admire one, "exactly like a tailor's paper of patterns," of which he gave his friends a comical description. It was tacked on to a set of stone terraces, with steps of turf: "There are three or four very high hills, almost as high as, and exactly in the shape of, a tansy pudding. You squeeze between these and a river, that is conducted at obtuse angles in a stone channel, and supplied by a pump; and when walnuts come in, I suppose it will be navigable. In a corner enclosed by a chalk wall are the samples I mentioned; there is a stripe of grass, another of corn, and a third *en friche*, exactly in the order of beds in a nursery."

As for the unlucky trees, lopped up to the top for fuel and standing in thin stiff rows by the highway, their round cabbage-heads coated with white dust, he declared he could not distinguish them from hairdressers.

Unluckily the *Anglomanie* ran to such lengths as to become not merely ridiculous but dull, and poor Horace Walpole, in the first shock of disillusion, complained that he had crossed the sea to meet nothing but *ennui*, which he could have had "in such perfection at home." "They are another people from what they were. They may be grow-

ing wise, but the . . . intermediate passage is dullness." The once gay French had even borrowed, he grumbled, the two dullest things England provided, whisk and the novels of Richardson. The former, to be sure, might have its compensation, "it takes a long time to ruin oneself by odd tricks"—not but what his friend Madame de Mirepoix contrived to lose near £1,400 very quickly, but then "with her parts, how should she play so dull a game well?" They played in a leisurely fashion to suit the late hours kept in Paris: "They constantly tap a rubber before supper, get up in the middle of a game, finish it after a meal of three courses and a dessert, add another rubber to it, then take their knotting bags, draw together into a little circle, and start some topic of literature or *ir*religion, and chat till it is time to go to bed—that is, till you [the Countess of Suffolk] would think it time to get up again."

People did not yet turn night into day in England, where dinner took place about 4 o'clock. Late hours and suppers were to be made the fashion by the Prince of Wales. In Paris, where folk dined at 2.30, supper at ten began a long evening, a mode to which Horace Walpole speedily adapted himself by breakfasting at noon and omitting dinner, and which he then declared to be delightful.

The seriousness with which English literature, or some of it, was regarded by French persons of culture considerably amused Walpole, particularly when he discovered David Hume, the historian, held for an oracle and "fashion itself, although his

French is almost as unintelligible as his English." Walpole's own opinion of Hume's *History* had been, as was not unusual with him, enthusiastic on first and cursory acquaintance, when he pronounced his style to be "the best we have in history," and laughed at the charge that it was Jacobite: "it is only not Georgeabite." But his criticisms grew sharper as he read the work, and he concluded that the "perfect veneration" of the French was due to its atheistic attitude. At all events Hume was "the only thing in the world that they believe implicitly; which they must do, for I defy them to understand any language that he speaks."

But it was now the *bon ton* among the French to be grave and learned. They affected philosophy, literature, and free thinking, and talked of scarce anything else in a manner Walpole found both dull and dangerous. ¶ Freethinking is for one's self, surely not for society; besides, one has settled one's way of thinking, or knows it cannot be settled; and for others I do not see why there is not as much bigotry in attempting conversions from any religion as to it. ¶ I dined today with a dozen *savants*, and though all the servants were waiting, the conversation was much more unrestrained, even on the Old Testament, than I would suffer at my own table in England, if a single footman was present. For literature, it is very amusing where one has nothing else to do. I think it rather pedantic in society; tiresome when displayed professionally—and, besides, in this country one is sure it is only the fashion of the day." }

But this gravity and monotony were not to be ascribed entirely to the attempt to imitate England, since "no nation can be another nation," but might be connected with another feature of change which could not escape Walpole's notice. Parisian society was a society of the old, or, at least, a society in which the old were the leaders. "Old folks may be as young as they please, and the young as grave as they will." "It is the country in the world to be sick and grow old in. The first step towards being in fashion is to lose an eye or a tooth. Young people I conclude there are, but where they exist I don't guess: not that I complain; it is charming to totter into vogue."

This, of course, is burlesque; Walpole had the ill luck to suffer for some weeks from a fit of the gout, and found all his French acquaintance so kind and so genuinely considerate that his heart was won. (But it was true that the old were dominant in society.) Old Mme. Geoffrin and old Mme. du Deffand still were among its most brilliant wits, the now aged Duc de Richelieu was still considered an eminent man of fashion, and did not Mme. Geoffrin compliment Walpole's popularity by dubbing him *le nouveau Richelieu*?

"Yes, yes, Madam," cries Walpole, "I am as like the Duc de Richelieu as two peas; but then they are two old withered grey peas." Society, he complained, "lived by the clock, by the almanac, and by custom"; laughing was out of fashion; their dress and their equipages were grown simple; the very streets and shops had a poor, empty look, and



MADAME LA MARQUISE DU DEFFAND

FROM A DRAWING BY M. DE CARMONTEL, FORMERLY AT  
STRAWBERRY HILL.





in a fit of fiercer ill-temper than usual, he dubs Paris "the ugliest beastly town in the universe!"

"Their boasted knowledge of society is reduced to talking of their suppers, and every malady they have about them, or know of," "there is not a man or woman here that is not a perfect old nurse, and who does not talk gruel and anatomy with equal fluency and ignorance and even with a disgusting familiarity." "The sameness of the life here is worse than anything but English politics and the House of Commons." "Gaiety, whatever it was formerly, is no longer the growth of this country; and I will own too that Paris can produce women of quality that I should not call women of fashion: I will not use so ungentle a term as vulgar; but for their indelicacy, I could call it still worse."

"In truth, Paris society but kept pace with the Court: there the old king, Louis XV, and his ageing family persevered in the dullest formalities of the age of Louis XIV, merely abbreviating ceremony until it became void of magnificence and meaningless." The middle-aged Dauphin was slowly dying, by no means to the regret of the "enlightened," who feared he would restore religion and maybe even recall the recently banished Jesuits: and there was little in the royal grandsons to pre-  
sage either brilliance of social life or political restoration.

A visit to the Court of Louis XV in 1765 was rather duller than the last view of that of George II, five years before, and much more pretentious. The custom of holding the royal reception whilst dress-

ing, dropped totally in England on the accession of George III, still persisted in Paris.

"You are let into the King's bedchamber just as he has put on his shirt; he dresses and talks good-humouredly to a few, glares at strangers, goes to mass, to dinner, and a-hunting." The worthy old Queen, "like Lady Primrose in the face, and Queen Caroline in the immensity of her cap," might be seen seated at her dressing-table attended by a few ancient ladies. Next, visitors were hurried to pay their respects to the Dauphin, though the poor man was visibly at death's door; similarly to the presence of the Dauphiness, the four old Princesses, the Dauphin's three boys, and "the whole concludes with seeing the Dauphin's little girl dine, who is as round and fat as a pudding."

The latest tribute royalty had received, the corpse of a huge wolf, recently killed at Gevaudun, was on view in the Queen's antechamber, "where he was exhibited to us with as much parade as if it was Mr. Pitt; . . . It is as like a wolf as a commissary in the late war, except, notwithstanding all the stories, that it has not devoured near so many persons. The King, Dauphin, Dauphiness, Mesdames and the wild beast did not say a word to me."

Certainly it appears as if in manners and taste alike the English had now outrun their teachers. Walpole could not get over the universal dirt of everything; if only he could wash it, he declared, he could enjoy it. Despite the *Anglomanie*, "the

total difference of manners between them and us, from the greatest object to the least" was as complete as ever, and the visitor could, at all events, be "much amused but not comfortable."

"There is not the smallest similitude in the twenty-four hours. It is obvious in every trifle. Servants carry their lady's train, and put her into her coach with their hat on. They walk about the streets in the rain with umbrellas to avoid putting on their hats; driving themselves in open chaises in the country without hats, in the rain too, and yet often wear them in a chariot in Paris when it does not rain. The very footmen are powdered from the break of day, and yet wait behind their masters, as I saw the Duc of Praslin's do, with a red pocket handkerchief about their necks. Versailles, like everything else, is a mixture of parade and poverty, and in every instance exhibits something most dissonant from our manners. } In the colonnades, upon the staircases, nay, in the antechambers of the royal family, there are people selling all sorts of wares. While we were waiting in the Dauphin's sumptuous bedchamber, till his dressing-room door should be opened, two fellows were sweeping' it, and dancing about in sabots to rub the floor."

Their insensibility to cold was completely continental. In an intense January frost Walpole found himself driving "nine miles to dine in the country, in a villa exactly like a greenhouse, except that there was no fire but in one room. We were four in a coach, and all our chinks stopped

with furs, and yet all the glasses were frozen. We dined in a paved hall, painted in fresco, with a fountain at one end ; for in this country they live in perpetual opera, and persist in being young when they are old, and hot when they are frozen." Nor was any refuge to be obtained by betaking himself to other friends, for all their houses were exactly alike. There seemed to be "but one idea in all the houses here ; the rooms are white and gold, or white ; a lustre, a vast glass over the chimney, and another opposite, and generally a third over against the windows, compose their rooms universally . . . surely there is nothing in which they so totally want imagination as in the furniture of their houses ?" He could discover no distinctions among them "but in the more or less gold, more or less baubles on the chimneys and tables ; and that now and then Vanloo has sprawled goddesses over the doors, and, at other times, Boucher. There is a routine for their furniture as much as for their phrases, and an exceeding want of invention in both. As for a comfortable chamber for winter, they have no more notion of it than Queen Frédégonde had." Even the wealthiest man in Paris, La Borde, the great banker of the court, could find no newer scope for luxury than to extend the size of his house, and Walpole enjoys himself in satirizing bad taste, when, not being noble, it was fair game. "How little and poor all your houses in London will look after his ! In the first place, you must have a garden half as long as the Mall, and then you must have fourteen

windows, each as long as t' other half, looking into it; and each window must consist of only eight panes of looking-glass. You must have a first and a second antechamber, and they must have nothing in them but dirty servants. Next must be the grand cabinet, hung with red damask, in gold frames, and covered with eight large and very bad pictures that cost four thousand pounds—I cannot afford you them a farthing cheaper. Under these, to give an air of lightness, must be hung basreliefs in marble. Then there must be immense armoires of tortoise-shells and *or moulu*, inlaid with medals—and then you may go into the *petit cabinet*, and then into the great *salle*, and the gallery, and the billiard-room, and the eating-room; and all these must be hung with crystal lustres from top to bottom; and then you must stuff them fuller than they will hold with granite tables and porphyry urns, and bronzes, and statues, and vases, and the Lord or the devil knows what . . .”

Those who in England, a little later, stared at the extraordinary and costly tastelessness of the Prince Regent's luxury might have added a sarcasm on his belated imitation of the last decadence of the *ancien régime*.

Dull among the other dullnesses as was the fashionable “philosophy,” whether that of Hume or Voltaire or Rousseau, it was, nevertheless, the most remarkable note of this curious phase of French society, nor did Walpole make the mistake of supposing it to be meaningless. “Good folks, they have no time to laugh, there is God and the

King to be pulled down first; and men and women, one and all, are devoutly employed in the demolition. They think me quite profane for having any belief left.” Controversy was raging over the *parlements*, suppressed by royal and ministerial order, erected into martyrs of liberty by the controversialists. Even Voltaire, idol of the *parlementaires*, could scarcely satisfy the more fanatical. “Il est bigot,” declared a lady devotee, “c’est un déiste.”

“You will think the sentiments of *the philosophers* very odd *state news*,” wrote Walpole, in a serious letter to Conway,”—“but do you know who *the philosophers* are, or what the term means here? In the first place it comprehends everybody; and in the next, means men who, avowing war against popery, aim, many of them, at the subversion of all religion, and still many more, at the destruction of regal power.”

It seems that the conversation of these people was apt to be pervaded by excessive egotism. They were better to read than know, pronounced Walpole. Long tirades were often interrupted only by disputations. One day “I was expressing my aversion to disputes: Mr. Hume, who very gratefully admires the tone of Paris, having never known any other tone, said with great surprise, ‘Why, what do you like, if you hate doth disputes and whisk?’” Walpole’s particular dislike to Rousseau found vent in a *jeu d’esprit*, professing to be a sarcastic letter to that philosopher from the King of Prussia—old Frederick II. It hit the fancy of



the court circle, to which many of Walpole's French friends belonged, and not only made him suddenly "the fashion," but led to visits and talk which caused him somewhat to modify his estimate of the real influence of the *philosophes*, and of the mental attitude of the decadent nobility. Overwhelmed though religion, and all that belonged to it, ostensibly was with sarcasm and abuse, "you must not conclude their people of quality atheists, at least, not the men. . . . They assent to a great deal, because it is the fashion, and because they don't know how to contradict. They are ashamed to defend the Roman Catholic religion, because it is quite exploded; but I am convinced they believe it in their hearts. They hate the Parliaments and the philosophers, and are rejoiced that they may still idolize royalty," on the score of the restoration of royal autocracy during the last decade of Louis XV. This assertion of the absolute authority of the crown delighted them so greatly as to surprise them into betraying the hollowness of their fashionable cackle of philosophy and freedom, *thinking*, adds Walpole, being "equivalent to the headache in a man of quality." But how long the nation, whom King and nobles ignored, would choose to submit to royal tyranny Walpole was in doubt. "The first moment of difficulty or disaster, the first war, will undoubtedly revive the resentment of a nation, who have chosen to crouch; but pretended to say that it was voluntarily and from affection."

The charm of the circle of friends whom Horace Walpole made in Paris, their extreme kindness to



him while he was ill, the ease and pleasantness of the holiday he had taken, and his devotion to wonderful old Mme. du Deffand, "my old fairy," the blind, deaf, fascinating genius who had conquered his heart and understanding, all gave him so strong a feeling of being at home in the French capital as, however he might laugh and criticize, proves him to have liked a great deal more than he disliked in it. He visited Paris again in 1767, in 1769, 1771, and, for the last time, in 1775, just after the accession of Louis XVI.

His renewed observations of Parisian high society did not produce much modification of his first impressions. The ambition of Choiseul, the intrigues of Maupeou or d'Aiguillon, the favours or hatreds of Mme. du Barry, produced the merely surface agitations of politics which did not gravely interest the English spectator, unless, as indeed was likely enough, the influence of a Choiseul should precipitate war. Ministers might change, he remarks, but it would amount to "only a crossing over and figuring in." At the reign of the du Barry he at first smiled cynically, since "the most serious events in France have always a ray of ridicule mixed with them," yet he could not but confess, in 1771, almost at the close of the reign of Louis XV, that the alterations he noticed were all for the worse. Court politics, more than ever affairs of paltriest intrigue, seemed to have affected public credit much more obviously than the Seven Years' War. Financial ruin, discontent, and depression were noticeable everywhere. \ "The King's trades-

men are ruined, his servants starving, and even angels and archangels cannot get their pensions and salaries . . . everybody is reforming their suppers and equipages." The purveyors of amusement could testify to the universal lack of money; "as there are few nabobs and nabobesses in this country, and as the middling and common people are not much richer than Job when he had lost everything but his patience," the proprietors of the Colisée were on the point of being ruined. Walpole, characteristically making "political observations by the thermometer of baubles," concluded that this appearance of general poverty among the better classes must be genuine, because there was nothing new in the shops; he said he knew the face of every snuff-box and every teacup by heart.


The unfortunate victims of state bankruptcy evinced their indignation after their manner by ostentatiously visiting the country palaces of the disgraced ministers, making epigrams, and singing vaudevilles against the King's mistress, the du Barry, or handing about libels against the Chancellor Maupeou, "and have no more effect than a skyrocket." In three months, Walpole prophesied, they would die to go to Court and to be invited to sup with Mme. du Barry. More menacing than the petulance of the nobility was the widespread ruin among other classes. The downfall of the Parlements, and the wholesale retrenchments in every department of government, made King and minister so much hated by all classes that Walpole wondered

whether some bankrupt might not turn Ravallac. Nevertheless, Louis XV and his servants were successful in ruthlessly crushing down all opposition; "For the misery of his people, and for the danger of his successors (if he escapes himself), the King, I think, will triumph over his country . . . and the people curse the King, the Chancellor, the mistress, and starve."

"Everybody feels in their own way," as Walpole observed; his own particular grief was to witness the ruinous condition of the royal palaces, and, more painful still, of their treasures of art. The Louvre was so ruinous that the rain came in upon its stores of noble pictures; at Versailles "Heaps of glorious works by Raphael and all the great masters" were piled up, in utter neglect." Their care is not less destructive in private houses," owing to gross and childish ignorance—"It makes me as peevish as if I was posterity."

"To increase the gloom of the general scene, the natural consequences of the fashionable attacks upon religion were now plainly manifest. "It is very singular," reflects the traveller, in 1771, "that I have not half the satisfaction in going into churches and convents that I used to have. The consciousness that the vision is dispelled, the want of fervour so obvious in the religious, the solitude that one knows proceeds from contempt, not from contemplation, make those places appear like abandoned theatres destined to destruction. The monks trot about as if they had not long to stay there; and what used to be holy gloom is now

but dirt and darkness. There is no more deception than in a tragedy acted by candlesnuffers."

Such were the final impressions made on Walpole by the régime of Louis XV, When he took his last journey to Paris, once more to visit his beloved old friend, Mme. du Deffand, the most pernicious king in Europe was dead and Louis XVI and his Austrian wife had just been crowned. 

On an earlier visit Walpole had recorded his impression of Louis XV's grandsons, three future kings of France, the last kings of the old régime. "The eldest [Louis XVI] is the picture of the Duke of Grafton, except that he is more fair, and will be taller. He has a sickly air, and no grace. The Count de Provence [Louis XVIII] has a very pleasing countenance, with an air of more sense than the Count d'Artois [Charles X], the genius of the family. They already tell as many *bons mots* of the latter as of Henri Quatre and Louis Quatorze. He is very fat, and the most like his grandfather of all the children."

On a closer view subsequently Walpole had dubbed the young Dauphin "an imbecile both in mind and body," but he forgot his sinister predictions upon finding the opening of the new reign signalized by marvellous improvements, not only in the manners of society but in the conduct of government; and Louis XVI is "a prince who has not yet betrayed a fault."

"*C'est la regne de la vertu,*" he cries. . . . "Messieurs de Turgot and Malesherbes are every day framing plans for mitigating monarchy and

relieving the people: and the King not only listens to but encourages them." The restoration of the Parlement of Paris, the attempted abolition of corvées, the release of prisoners from the Bastille, the King's publicly expressed approval of noble sentiments, a suggestion of economy in the curtailment of Court balls, and the general enthusiasm for the now revolting Americans—all betokened, to the mind of Walpole, as of many others, a sudden and almost miraculous renovation of France. The change of spirit appeared also to have restored material prosperity. Paris looked fresh with a number of handsome new buildings and streets, and Walpole's now optimistic eyes beheld everywhere the stucco and sham marble, white paint, glass and *or moulu* as illustrating no longer monotonous uniformity but youthful spirit and good taste.

"If France has the sense to keep its present ministers, it will soon be greater than ever."

"I could not have believed, if I had not seen with my own eyes, how very flourishing it is to what it was four years ago."

Walpole, however, was not wholly absorbed in the political question, any more than were his French friends; above and athwart the web of politics, reform, and intrigue, moved the dazzling figure of the young Austrian Queen, and so cultivated a critic could not but be fascinated by the early brilliance of Marie Antoinette. The first time he had seen her, as Dauphiness, "she was going after the late King to chapel, and shot



through the room like an aerial being, all brightness and grace, and without seeming to touch earth—*vera incessu patuit dea!*” And now, after a visit to the young regal court, he tells Lady Ossory:

“What I have to say I can tell your Ladyship in a word, for it was impossible to see anything but the Queen! She is a statue of beauty, when standing or sitting; grace itself when she moves. She was dressed in silver, scattered over with *lauriers roses*; few diamonds, and feathers, much lower than the Monument. They say she does not dance in time, but then it is wrong to dance in time.”

A month later, however, he sarcastically informs the same correspondent, “The charming Queen is gone out of fashion, so I am no longer in love with her,” an allusion to her early unpopularity in society circles on account of her infatuation for the Polignacs.

And the longer Walpole watched, the less certainty did he venture to entertain of the happy destinies of the country in which he had begun to feel so much interest. “Things did not seem fixed,” he thought: “there are two parties, if either of which prevailed Dame Vertu would return to her rags. The charming Queen is eager to reinstate Mons. de Choiseul, and then Madame Gloire would blaze out in full *éclat*. If Monsieur [the Comte de Provence, Louis XVIII] and Madame . . . get the ascendant, then the Princess de Marsan (Monsieur’s governess) would bring back the Jesuits, persecution, the Church, and the devil knows what—everything but a Madame du Barri,

who must wait for the reign of the Comte d'Artois, till when there will be no naughty doings in this country." It was a curious prophecy.

The lightness, or rather frivolity, of the temper ~~of the upper classes~~ was, he thought, too unstable to support a consistent policy, though so impulsive that changes might be rushed upon. The reforming Ministers might soon be "epigrammatized" out of their places. "Agriculture, economy, reformation, philosophy," were the *bon ton* at court, but in Paris political admonitions were being chanted by performers at the opera.

"In short, the nation has jumbled itself into such a hodgepodge of philosophy, which they set to music, and of eloquence, which they dress with all sauces, that their productions are monsters of pedantry."

The serious reformers had scarce a chance; "designing men, who have no weapon against good men but ridicule, already employ it to make a trifling nation laugh at its benefactors; and, if it is the fashion to laugh, the laws of fashion will be executed preferably to those of common sense."

The *Anglomanie* had, of course, by this time died its natural death, save for still fashionable horse-racing and caricatures of English gardens. The new fashion embraced by the enlightened was a vehement admiration for the Americans. America was now to them the land of liberty, England, of tyranny.

French politics, as Walpole perceived, indeed concerned England far more than the average Englishman supposed, for if "Madame Gloire"



should come to be worshipped, then the revolt of the American colonies offered to her votaries an opportunity of attacking England hardly to be resisted by an ambitious minister. But Walpole as a prophet on the American crisis was as disregarded as Cassandra.

He had returned to England when, in 1776, came the news of the victory of Marie Antoinette over Turgot. "A great revolution," he termed the dismissal of that wise minister, a disaster to two nations. "Poor France, and poor England! Choiseul, or if not Choiseul, some Louvois or other, will rise out of this fall of patriot philosophers; and then we shall be forced to see the wisdom of the Stamp Act and of persisting in taxing America!"

Characteristic of Walpole's invariably "gentlemanly" limitations is the fact that though he could thus justly predict the American revolt and its assistance by the French, and though he lived to see the worst of his forebodings for France herself more than realized, he never showed the faintest comprehension of any importance attaching to that part of the French nation which was non-noble. He supposed that, as the fashionable ministers were responsible for the bellicose alliance of France with America and the disasters which resulted to England from it, so it was the "philosophy" of the factional nobility which was alone accountable for the revolutionary outbreaks of 1789-90. In none of his visits to France had he ever opened his eyes to any population but that of the best society.

## VII

### KING'S MINISTER'S AND KING'S FRIENDS

**I**N spite of Horace Walpole's haughty pride in his independence, there had been a moment when a vision opened to his imagination of a career more exciting than that of a mere spectator, of influence on the steps of the throne, and friendship with a First Minister. His republican principles fell into abeyance during the first months of pleasurable anticipation in which he, like everybody else, indulged on the accession of "a charming young king," "the most amiable young man in the world" whom people, he feared, would not love sufficiently; "a young man with a good heart," during whose reign "good service will prove good credentials": a true prophecy, assuredly, though not in the sense in which it was written.

And Walpole wrote to remind Mr. Mann, at Florence, that he ought now to make practical use of his acquaintance with Mr. Mackenzie, for Mackenzie (who took that name for a fortune he inherited) was the brother of Lord Bute, and Lord Bute was the coming man.

Walpole himself was amply possessed of Scottish friends, there was Mackenzie's wife, Lady

Betty, and her sisters Lady Strafford and Lady Mary Coke, all daughters of the second Duke of Argyll, while his cousin Conway's wife, Lady Ailesbury, was also a Campbell, and their cousin. He would cultivate Lady Bute, whom he knows to be one of the best and most sensible women in the world, albeit her mother Lady Mary Wortley Montagu had been his particular detestation : and Bute himself Mr. Walpole quite approved of, partly as "one of fortune's prodigies," on whom the fickle wheel had bestowed so early such ample wealth and royal favour, and partly because both he and his young master, King George III, "have certainly both of them great propensity to the arts."

The arts were to link together the ideal king and his amiable minister with the *virtuoso*, whose beautiful manners and polished wit were, after all, those of a born courtier, and who would have been perfectly in his place as art critic to a King.

And Lord Bute took the first step; in a moment of early complacency, he wrote to sound Mr. Walpole about a plan for a publication on the royal art treasures which had appeared to take the young monarch's fancy : and the independent philosopher, fortified, no doubt, by the recollection of his strong band of feminine supporters, reciprocated the idea with alacrity and offered his best assistance to his Majesty, through Lord Bute, in all the domain of *bric-à-brac*. He at once despatched to the favourite Earl some scarce catalogues he possessed, "that if you should think they may contribute to his Majesty's information or amusement, they may

come to his hand more properly from your Lordship than they could do from me. . . . Having dabbled a good deal in this kind of things, if there is any point in which I could be of use to your Lordship for his Majesty's satisfaction, I should be very ready and happy to employ my little knowledge or pains. And permit me to say, my Lord, your Lordship cannot command anybody who will execute your orders more cheerfully or more disinterestedly, or that will trouble you less with any solicitations: an explanation which even esteem and sincerity are forced to make to one in your Lordship's situation. The mere love of the arts, and the joy of seeing on the throne a prince of taste, are my only inducements for offering my slender services, etc."

Alas, the artistic tastes of George III were very easily satisfied with much less virtuosity than Mr. Walpole's, and the amiable good heart of the charming young sovereign did not prompt him to walk in such political paths as Mr. Walpole and his friends could possibly approve. George III and the "Revolution Whigs" were incapable of considering each other in any other wise than as monsters of moral turpitude: the Whigs had enslaved the crown and sacrificed the people to the service of the narrowest class selfishness: or else George III was a modernized Stewart, subverting the sacred principles of the Revolution to erect a despotism. There would be relentless war between them. "The new parties are, *I will*, and *You shall not*; and their principles do not admit delay."

[Horace Walpole's comments on the political situation frequently reflect rather the varying opinions of average London society than any definite party view.] He was cynically amused when the hurry of the young king and his Scottish minister to end the Seven Years' War brought about the resignation of Pitt, and enlisted the whole weight of popular resentment against the Crown.

One of the odd minor results of the Hanoverian régime was the noticeable phalanx of Scotch peers and members who throughout three reigns supported the monarch's minister through thick and thin with a solid body of silent votes. It had been, in the early days, the obvious policy of the new dynasty to bestow great attention upon such Scottish lords as held aloof from Jacobitism, and, similarly, the obvious policy of those magnates to cultivate royal and ministerial favour. Smaller posts than were expected by the great English nobles satisfied the poorer Scots, and many of them were, in fact, absolutely bound to the service of the crown by the pressure of pecuniary necessity. Before the death of George II the disappearance of Jacobite danger had removed the original motive for this reciprocal favour and devotion, but the value to a minister of a band of reliable henchmen remained as great and became all the greater when the solvent of [George III's restoration of the personal influence of monarchy divided the English nobility and gentry into more decided cliques than ever.] Converted Jacobites now swelled the ranks

of the hungry, and the London populace, familiar as ever with the personal composition of the political world, jumped to the conclusion that a Scottish chief minister must mean a deluge of Northerners. Their pride and jealousy were stirred quite as much by Bute's Scottish origin as by Pitt's resignation, so much so that a whole newspaper—Wilkes's famous "North Briton"—could be run by appealing to this suspicion. In the crowd outside Bute's house, on his first ministerial levée day, "What is the matter here?" asked a voice. "Why," answered George Brudenel, "there is a Scotchman got into the Treasury, and they can't get him out." It proved, on the contrary, very easy to get him out. An explosion of popular clamour, a few bonfires and burnings of Jack Boots, and Bute resigned in a panic which fairly amazed Walpole and every other hardened English politician.

The direct consequence of Bute's flight was that the young King, having shown his hand, was left helpless before the Whig cliques, who for eight years rang the changes on ministerial posts, hectored their sovereign, and applied to the treatment of the critical questions of Ireland and America the merest party spirit and personal spite.

It was notorious that the great hero of the war and idol of the Londoners, Mr. Pitt, had always stood apart from the great Whig interests and had claimed to direct the nation's destinies by right of his supreme gifts and the nation's will. It might be thought that he and the King would unite against the nobles. The combination was even



attempted, but the great minister and the young King were both too arrogant to believe themselves in need of each other's support. George III, doubtless, entertained even more strongly than Horace Walpole a dislike of that something of the theatrical in Pitt's manner which marked the demagogic element of his character. And George III, incapable of fathoming the political and national ambitions which had at bottom produced the Seven Years' War, as he was incapable of perceiving any political principle beyond that of dutiful obedience to himself, was unhampered by any tendency towards admiration of the transcendent abilities of the ex-minister. Abilities, indeed, were distasteful to the King, they probably did not make for modesty, devoutness, conventionality, and submission, qualities the King prized beyond all others. They were, in short, dangerous.

Walpole, who could never quite get over an impatient amusement at Pitt's skill in "playing to the gallery," had nevertheless an honest appreciation of his achievements. And if his opinion of the great man varies from year to year, so much the more truly does he represent—though he would indeed have been grievously horrified by the notion—the superficial political views of the generality. At an earlier date he had announced to his friend Mann Pitt's accession to supreme power (in 1758) by a burlesque summary of the situation :

“Adieu! my dear sir—that is, adieu to our correspondence, for I am neither dying nor quarrel-



ling with you, but as we, Great Britons, are quarrelling with all Europe, I think very soon I shall not be able to convey a letter to you but by the way of Africa, and there I am afraid the post-offices are not very well regulated . . . well, if we have not as many lives as a cat or the King of Prussia! . . . I laugh, but seriously we are in a very critical situation; and it is as true, that if Mr. Pitt had not exerted the spirit and activity that he has, we should ere now have been past a critical situation . . . at present our unanimity is prodigious—you would as soon hear *No* from an old maid as from the House of Commons . . .”

“Seriously [the glory] is very great; and as I am too inconsiderable to envy Mr. Pitt, I give him all the honour he deserves.”

Yet he cannot resist a comic comparison of the minister with the extravagant Lady Mary Coke—“One of them must have caught of the other that noble contempt which makes a thing’s being *impossible not signify*. It sounds very well in *sensible* mouths; but how terrible to be the chambermaid or the army of such people!”

It would be interesting to know what the haughty statesman thought of Horace Walpole’s letter of congratulation, in which he first pays what, to him, is the highest of all tributes, a comparison of Pitt with his father Sir Robert Walpole, and then carefully safeguards his own dignity with “Sir, do not take this for flattery: there is nothing in your power to give that I would accept.”

Mr. Pitt behaved to Mr. Walpole with extreme courtesy; and Mr. Walpole long maintained a friendship and a correspondence, not wholly untouched by caricature, with Mrs. Ann Pitt, the minister's headstrong sister, conspicuous among Maids of Honour and continental travellers. But when Pitt's acceptance first of a pension and then of a peerage had offended Walpole's rigid rules for political conduct, his recognition of the great orator's achievements was cancelled and, ranking him as after all a mere demagogue and time server, he could even term him "the mountebank of politics."

The party which of all others was especially detestable to Walpole was "the Bedford crew," the most odious group of English politicians in the eighteenth century. His Grace, a colossus of wealth and self esteem, a "leviathan among the creatures of the crown," as Burke afterwards termed the fifth duke, could hardly have obtained in office much increase of either, but it was due to his dignity that his followers should have their share, that is, rather more than their due share, of good places. Incidentally it may be observed that the Paymastership, with its fat emoluments and easy latitude as to work seems to rank considerably higher than the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, which was not then an autocracy but simply the most arduous and responsible office among the Treasury posts.


The "Bloomsbury gang," as others termed them,

was definitely intent upon place and lucre. No principles hindered any of its individual members from assenting to any policy. Walpole even ironically termed them the best of the factions, because they had not shame enough to be hypocrites. In consequence Bedford's brother-in-law Gower, his adherents Sandwich and Weymouth, and his henchman Mr. Rigby, secured lucrative office for something like a score of years. The last three were among the most notorious debauchees of the age.

His Grace was not really a very truculent man, he had indeed but a very slight perception of anything save himself. He was quite unaware of proffering an insult when he declined to trust the King's word and demanded a written and signed promise, just as he was unaware of any hint of arrogance in "sending for" Mr. Pitt or George Grenville to come and be interviewed. The duchess was understood to be his moving spirit, "a dangerous woman," implacable against the King's mother for not having named her Mistress of the Robes to the new Queen, and many besides Walpole attributed the Bedford rancour against the Sovereign and Lord Bute to the promptings of the Duchess, seconded by several diplomatist sisters and nieces. Indeed, the nieces of Gertrude, Duchess of Bedford, and their marriages occupied the virulent attention of Junius. "I am heartily glad the Duchess of Bedford does not set her heart on marrying me to anybody, I am sure she would bring it about," remarked Walpole when he watched how her "Majesty-Grace sallied forth with colours flying and took possession of

the Drawing room " with her family and supporters, and he quite enjoyed the sight of Princess Emily at a "funereal loo" party as she "entertained her Grace with the joy the Duke of Bedford will have in being a grandfather; in which reflection I believe the grandmotherhood was not forgotten."

Of Bedford's partner, Sandwich, Walpole's opinion varied. He could not help feeling a partiality to him, and half apologizes for liking a man of such notoriously bad character, "but besides that he has in several instances been very obliging to me, there is a good humour and an industry about him that are very uncommon." Sandwich's sudden and shameless attack upon his erstwhile crony Wilkes, directed to suit the momentary feeling of the Houses and the vindictiveness of the court, occasioned a burst of actual delight from Walpole: "I do not admire politicians, but when they are excellent in their way, one cannot help allowing them their due. Nobody but he could have struck a stroke like this."



Walpole's opinion of the stroke and of the striker soon veered round to the more general verdict, and a year after Sandwich is to him an example of the depth a government may sink to when he could be "called in Parliament to his face 'the most profligate sad dog in the kingdom' and not a man can open his lips in his defence. Sure power must have some strange unknown charm when it can compensate for such contempt!" To profligates and gamblers large salaries and the power of disposing of a number of posts by sale or favour, might easily compensate for hard opinions.

A few months later the Bedford-Sandwich-Grenville Ministry vanished, "undone by their own insolence and unpitied . . . though I believe Sandwich will contrive to return like Belphegor . . . but he can never get rid of the smell of brimstone." In five years Sandwich did come back, in the North Ministry, still an energetic and conscienceless time-server and this time no more among the Whigs but a "King's Friend." Walpole has, however, forgotten the brimstone smell; "Your old friend, Lord Sandwich, is activity, industry and knowledge in person; and the most proper man in the world to be at the head of the marine."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, before the close of the American War, for the mismanagement of which Sandwich at the Admiralty was so largely responsible, the critic has discovered that, despite his abilities, he was grown "obstinate, peevish, intractable, and was not born for great actions. He loved subtlety and tricks and indirect paths, qualities repugnant to genius." Sandwich would have been amused to find himself furnishing so much moral.

Sandwich, after all, had a ready wit, and in the eyes of many besides "Horry" wit covered the gravest sins. Walpole's *bête noire*, George Grenville and his brother, Lord Temple, were without this saving grace. Perhaps few politicians have loomed so large in their own day in proportion to their permanent fame. Their self-esteem was colossal. Indeed, England proved unable to furnish

<sup>1</sup> No. 1381.

a station of dignity commensurable with Lord Temple's requirements. George, less exacting, was satisfied with the premiership, and has left the reputation of being the greatest bore recorded in English history. The Grenvilles were serenely unaware that in most men's eyes their importance arose from their connection with Pitt, in whose wake they had so easily swum into office. Their family, of course, entitled them to partake in the divine right of rule which belonged to the Whig nobility, to which the mere Commoner and man of genius who had been permitted to marry their sister could have no claim.

George Grenville had made his parliamentary début as a steady, hardworking young man, apparently likely to be useful as one of those dutiful men of practical affairs of whom even the wittiest or most reckless cabinets must contain a few. He had led the House of Commons for Bute, and on his flight betook himself with self-sufficient complacency to the Treasury and set up for First Minister. The problems of finance and governance, however, could not all be manipulated by one young man, and Grenville looked about for a backing. The Bedfords were always in the market, and—oblivious of Bute or the King, and to their intense dismay—to the Bedfords did the minister successfully apply to fill up the other places. It was but to discover that they had really purchased him, had committed him to a quarrel with his brother and brother-in law, and arrogated to themselves the sweets of office, the disposal of places



and peerages. Immersed in the double struggle to accomplish a budget and to remain indispensable, Grenville happened to tax America, and thereby became unenviably immortal. But after a couple of years in office, he had grown insufferable. "When he has wearied me for two hours he looks at his watch to see if he may not tire me for an hour more," grumbled the poor King.

Grenville drew a peculiar advantage, as Walpole averred, from his terrible long-windedness: "He will speak so long that nobody will perceive that he has none to speak on his side." His invention of the famous Stamp Act fixed his attention and his obstinacy on the necessity of coercing the American colonies into carrying out its provisions. Walpole pitied the ministry "when George Grenville has got a new continent opened to harangue upon. I have long thought he should have lived in Lapland, where one day lasts for six months."

The King, though in agreement with his minister's American obsession, was more strongly swayed by his personal aversion, and Grenville soon found his party shrink to the Bedford faction alone, "for Lord Temple who has joined his brother George [and deserted Pitt] seems to have carried nothing with him but the contempt of the nation."

Events never taught a Grenville anything. That his Stamp Act had flung the colonies into commotion was to George only a reason for enforcing it by martial methods. That by the success of the pacific Rockingham ministry (1765-6) "his ignorance and blindness were displayed to his face and to the whole



world" was not in the least patent to him, and no sooner did that brief ministry dissolve, from its own inherent weakness and the King's efforts ("the fools and the rogues"—the Rockinghams and the Bedfords—squabbling over personal questions), and from the sudden onslaught of Pitt ("Mr. Pitt has kicked and cuffed to right and left and all is disorder"), than Grenville was again to be found "demanding declarations against America." But by that time Horace Walpole's connection with any political party had come to a definite close.

Politics were to Horace Walpole something as the candle to the moth—except that he avoided the usual fate of moths. He loved party, intrigue, and the knowledge of the secret strings which pulled the performers. But he hated regularity and taking trouble. He had a sincere wish for the good of his country, an honest hatred of misconduct and venality, but a complete ignorance of his country's requirements, and a complete contempt for practical business. Nature, he believed, had given him a statesman's head; but he was proud of the lack of ambition with which she had also characterized him. He supposed his own political judgement, freely relied on by Conway, to be of considerable use to the Rockingham party, and even occasionally tried to inspire the Duke of Richmond to decision and a speech. As he hated the Bedfords, and met with some injustice or indignity at their hands, he had supposed that the advent of Rockingham, Richmond, and Conway to power in 1765 would have entailed a pleasant access of

importance to his wise self, and he was both astonished and indignant to find himself still treated as simply the private friend.

He was too clever to make himself absurd by showing his friends that he had expected more than had accrued, but, unhappily for his own credit, and guilelessly as certain of the verdict of posterity as of his own political merit—he set down in his Memoirs his resentment at the conduct of the party—which, indeed, he did somewhat reveal to that safe confidant, Sir H. Mann.

“Not the smallest view of self-interest had entered into my imagination. On the contrary I risked an easy ample fortune with which I was thoroughly contented. When I found unjust power exerted to wrong me, I am not ashamed to say I flattered myself that, if ever our party were successful, I should obtain to have the payments of my place settled on some foundation that should not expose me to the caprice and wanton tyranny of every succeeding Minister; for court I was resolved to make to none, whether friend or foe—a haughtiness I maintained throughout my life, never once condescending to go to the levee of any first Minister. My wish of making this independence perfectly easy I had hinted to Mr. Conway during our opposition. He received it with silence. It was not in my nature to repeat such a hint. As disinterestedness was my ruling passion, I did hope that on the change some considerable employment would be offered to me, which my vanity

would have been gratified in refusing. It was mortifying enough to me to find that my name had not been so much as mentioned. That I would take no place was well known—I had frequently declared it.”

After this touching explanation of disinterestedness, Walpole can but conclude, with acerbity, that it was all Conway's fault. Conway, he avers, was so eaten up with the desire for applause that he cared for nothing which would not entail it—“no glory would have accrued from his serving me,” so he sacrificed Walpole and gave his support to a brother and brothers-in-law who had neglected him, merely in order to obtain the credit of being a generous man.

To search for opportunities of feeling hurt and neglected was almost one of the staple occupations of many men in society. Their feelings were so fine that they never felt personal resentment; letter after letter from peer and bishop, parson and soldier, explains that there is no selfish tinge in their complaints. They do not place any value upon public opinion, nor, of course, seek after pecuniary profit, but they are hurt when a lifelong friend forgets to reward their transcendent merit, or they are concerned for the credit of His Majesty if the respect due to their rank, services, and connections is not made evident; they are distressed that the honour of the Service, the Church, or the peerage should seem to be lowered; they are grieved that neighbours should think His Majesty

capable of ingratitude, or the ministry to be ill-informed—and so on *ad infinitum* with absolute gravity. Horace Walpole was exactly like the rest.

To us it may appear in no way remarkable that a man of ample means and immersed in private hobbies should not care to sit in Parliament, frequent levees, and sue for favours. That he felt otherwise and regarded himself as phenomenally impartial and disinterested throws a sarcastic light on the standards of the age: “I was born at the top of the world; I have long been nobody and am charmed to be so”]: he felt quite entitled to patronize a Duc de Choiseul or an Earl of Chatham.

As there was nothing to be got, not even gratitude or deference, by remaining in the House of Commons while his party took office, he not unnaturally felt that it was unnecessarily self-sacrificing to continue to occupy his safe seat, while the prospect of being beaten up to vote outraged his independence: “though I was their slave while they were out of place, I will not be so now they are in, nor will be ordered to come and go just as they want me.” It had been one of his numerous excellent grounds for disdaining to ask favours that “the fewer obligations I have the less right has anybody to tax my attendance”; so he went away to Paris for seven months, and at the next general election, Rockingham having in the meantime lost office, he declined to be again elected for King’s Lynn.

Much later than this it was still considered that

to constrain Members of Parliament to attend the sittings of the House and vote with their party was hardly more constitutional than was the existence of a party voting automatically for its leaders without exercising individual judgement. To submit to such a requirement was held to imply that the Member clung to some office or pension the tenure of which depended on the favour of the Government, and gave his vote to purchase his income. This was, indeed, frequently the case, and explains how it was that belonging to the Government party is usually, in the correspondence or satire of those days, surmised to be synonymous with profiting by corruption. Thus does Bishop Cornwallis of Lichfield deplore the hard predicament of a friend who, through private influence, had secured a good post:<sup>1</sup>

“The present Ministers insisted upon his coming into Parliament or a resignation of the place. He is forced to attend every night and if he goes away a note soon follows. Nothing can be more degrading. The whipper-in is the other member for Eye. . . .”

In spite of his ostentatious withdrawal from parliament Walpole's letters do not indicate any falling off in his interest in public affairs. The characters of the principal actors on the political stage might easily be collected from his flying touches—the arrogance of Earl Temple, the brilliance of the fascinating, worthless Charles Townshend, the shrewdness of the demagogue Wilkes, the humours

<sup>1</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., 1909, Various, vi, p. 429.

of London mobs—all are vivid in his pages, and not least impressive is the sense of suspense created by the detachment of Pitt—magnificent, tantalizing, surprising as ever, “like Milton’s moon, in *clouded majesty*,” whose mere name was sufficient to alarm the French and restore public confidence when at last, in 1766, he consented to become “Dictator.”

Horace Walpole announced the news to Mann with gusto: “On every occasion I beg you to be as haughty as may be, you no longer represent the King, but Mr. Pitt; and pray keep up all the dignity of his crown. It will be your own fault if you don’t huff yourself into a red riband. This is my serious advice as well as my temper. You know I love to have the majesty of the people of England dictate to all Europe. Nothing would have diverted me more than to have been at Paris at this moment. Their panic at Mr. Pitt’s name is not to be described. Whenever they were impertinent, I used to drop, as by chance, that he would be Minister in a few days, and it never failed to occasion a dead silence.”

But not all of the fashionable politicians shared the convictions of Walpole, of the City of London, and the continent of Europe; there were many who placed on a level with Pitt the brilliant, Townshend, a man whose amazing talents caused him to be sometimes spoken of in his own time as “the great Charles Townshend,” but who lives in history as the most fatal Chancellor of the Exchequer yet known to English annals,



the man whose harum-scarum finance lost to us America.

It was outrageous flattery to ascribe to him any credit for the treaty of Paris in 1763, for over that treaty Townshend had executed a shameless *volte-face*: "the whole House and the whole Town knew that, on the preliminaries, he came down prepared to speak *against* them; but that, on Pitt's retiring, he plucked up courage, and spoke *for* them. Well—you want to know what place he is to have—so does he too. I don't want to know *what* place, but that he has some one; for I am sure he will always do most hurt to the side on which he professes to be; consequently I wish him with the administration . . ." *i.e.* of Grenville and the Bedfords. Though Walpole enjoyed Townshend's oratory as much as any good critic, he was repelled by the young man's inherent faults of character, "setting himself up at auction." He had been eventually purchased by the coveted place of Paymaster, whence Pitt roughly ousted him, in 1766.

"He was sent for, and arrived exulting"—Pitt had ignored the weathercock of politics in his Ministry of 1757—"Yesterday his crest fell terribly; Mr. Pitt sent him two dictatorial lines, telling him, he was too considerable not to be in a responsible place, and therefore would be proposed by him on the morrow to the King for Chancellor of the Exchequer, to which he required a positive answer by nine at night. This was plain. You are not to remain Paymaster, but are to be *promoted* from seven thousand pounds a year, to seven and



twenty hundred—to such contemptuous slavery has his enormous folly reduced his enormous parts!”

Townshend was compelled to accept this kick upstairs, and duly lamented his own unselfishness to his friend Lord George Sackville:<sup>1</sup> “The King’s commands have carried me from a lazy to a laborious employment, from cheerfulness to anxiety, and from indifference to some degree of responsibility, and I am sorry to hear that in the same instant, the Government has lost the communication and aid of your talents and experience.” Sackville, whose misdirected egotism was not less disastrous to his country than Townshend’s, had already been dismissed from a lucrative place by the dictatorial Pitt, and reciprocates to Townshend, “Your accepting the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer is the strongest proof of your duty and attachment to the King, and I trust he is sensible that few of his subjects would have acted with the same zeal and disinterestedness upon such an occasion.”

Just a year later Walpole chronicles the death of the useless genius: “His good humour prevented one from hating him, and his levity from loving him; but in a political light, I own I cannot look upon it as a misfortune. His treachery alarmed me and I apprehended everything from it.”

There exists a curious description of the man who was by his contemporaries rated so highly,

<sup>1</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., 1904, Stopford-Sackville Papers, i, p. 67.

by a critic most competent to judge, for it is endorsed "Character of Ch. Townshend by Lord Holland [Henry Fox].<sup>1</sup>

"In these our days a Genius hath arisen with such powers of intellect that history affords no equal to him; he is compleat in every part of oratory, finished in every branch of science, his elocution nervous, yet polished; his wit prompt and fine, his humour delightful, and his satire keen and cutting. In a word, his knowledge is as unlimited as his admirable faculties, and yet, with all these (deficient in constancy and firmness), he hath hitherto done as little good as mischief to his country.

"His heart is often penetrated with the love of virtue, and possessed at times of the noblest feelings of patriotism; for, as he has studied everything, he cannot but perceive the beauty of truth, and that the primary virtue of a social being is to promote the happiness of the community of which he is a member; and though this is a duty he frequently wishes to perform, it is always with a proviso that it does not interfere with his love of midnight roar, his propensity to joke, fun and the laughable bagatelles of life, which governs all his actions and predominates in the minutest, as well as in the most important affairs; in curing a lady's lap-dog of a fit of the colic, as in consulting the safety of a great Empire. There never was a

<sup>1</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., 1904, Stopford-Sackville Papers, i, p. 386.

stronger proof of the imperfection of human nature; this moment great, good and wise; the next, capricious, whimsical and absurd.

“If this mind could be wholly bent to the advancement of the national interest, he would be more than man; but as it is, the country may rejoice that there is such an alloy in his temperament, for if ambition and the lust of power had possessed him, such talents could scarcely fail to undermine all the pillars of liberty, and entirely to erase from the minds of the people every principle of patriotism and virtue.”

It must, surely, have been the consciousness of some lack of genius which had permitted Lord Holland to be himself so notorious an underminer of the principles of patriotism and virtue.

But *Patriotism* was in those days a technical term well understood. Since the time of the elder Pitt's party opposition to Sir Robert Walpole, *patriots* meant those opponents of Government who appealed for popular support on the ground of their disinterested concern for the nation. Horace Walpole himself depicts the type:

“A young man is inflamed with the love of his country, Cato, Leonidas, Epaminondas, fire his imagination, and inspire imitation. Liberty charms him; he is jealous of her; he would risk his life for her safety. He speaks, writes, moves, and drinks for her. He searches records, draws remonstrances, fears prerogative, hopes for public misfortunes, that she may escape in the confusion. A

Secretary of the Treasury waits on him in the evening; he appears next morning at a minister's levee; he goes to court, is captivated by the King's affability, moves an address, drops a censure on the liberty of the press, kisses hands for a place, bespeaks a birthday coat, votes against Magna Charta, builds a house in town, lays his farms into pleasure-grounds under the inspection of Mr. Brown, pays nobody, games, is undone, asks a reversion for three lives, is refused, finds the Constitution in danger, and becomes a Patriot once more."

The treachery apprehended by Walpole from Charles Townshend was personal, as were all the political principles with which Walpole appears to have been acquainted. To him, as to all the serious Whigs of Burke's and Rockingham's connection there was an actual state of war between the King and the party of Revolution principles, and to break away from a political clique and accept the King's favour in return for voting the King's measures was, in their eyes, really a treason to the nation.

The men who composed, in either House, the growing company of the *King's Friends* were not by any means all persons of bad character. After "The Rockinghams" had twice tried simultaneously to pacify America and to restore the "true Whig constitution" of half a century ago, and had found their efforts for the former object swamped by the impossibility of attaining the latter, a good

many plain men, as well as a great number whose politics were merely the business whereby they earned their living, were faced by the necessity of placing their votes at the service of either the Bedford gang or the sovereign.

For in 1766 Chatham, who had helped the King to dismiss the Rockingham ministry, accepting a peerage in pledge of his new alliance with the Whig-hating monarch, and had then framed that extraordinary Grafton-Chatham Cabinet immortalized in the words of Burke as the "tesselated pavement" cabinet, the ministry composed of a galaxy of talent without any homogeneous principles of action—Chatham, still the terror of France, the idol of the colonists, and the hope of the great majority of Englishmen, had sunk suddenly in a strange physical and mental collapse, and the Bedfords had once more, on the death of Townshend, captured the ministry. The Bedfords were notoriously untrustworthy promisers, and subordinate office holders felt uneasy. Their conduct of the Wilkes election drove the last honest followers of Chatham out of their ranks and made them intensely unpopular in London, and George III, by this time (1770) a much abler "old parliamentary hand" than any minister, seized the moment to oust Grafton and reconstruct by the help of his friend North a ministry more to his taste. Lord North, as Chancellor of the Exchequer for the past three years, had no doubt already learned "how to talk to gentlemen," as Henry Fox expressed it, and it was clear both to the business-like and to the per-

plexed that security of payments and steadiness of policy were at length to become the rule. Their minds were very much relieved and for the next ten years the steady pursuance of the King's policy, and the steady voting of the King's Friends were not to be perturbed by occasional explosions from the incalculable Chatham or furious diatribes from Burke.

The King's Friends were easily recruited in the Commons, for His Majesty was an admirable electioneering agent, not perhaps personally in Windsor, but as manager and whip by letter and instruction, and North proved a teachable henchman, whose pleasant manner and imperturbable good humour made him invaluable. He was so affable that even refusals came from him with a friendliness which left the applicant without rancour and still possessed of hopes.

But it required more skill to construct an obedient voting machine in the House of Lords, where pecuniary freedom and long tradition had trained the peers in independence. But there were the Scotch, and not a few Irish, and the King rallied to him, besides, a number of well-meaning English lords, whose simple political understanding was readily persuaded by the pleasant familiarity of a morally excellent and obviously well-intentioned monarch—men such as Lord Mount Edgcumbe, or the second Earl Harcourt, Walpole's model of taste, who took the market cross of Oxford to stand in his woods and transplanted an entire village for the convenience of his dignity. Miss Burney, innocent of political manœuvres, gives a pretty



picture of the royal family campaign at Nuneham which captivated the courteous virtuoso Earl.

There were others more easily if more expensively to be dealt with, the Earl of Denbigh<sup>1</sup> as a supporter of Pitt and a friend of Earl Temple was appointed Master of the Harriers and Foxhounds on the accession of George III. He drew a salary of £2,000. When Pitt's resignation occurred his Lordship was surprised that Earl Temple had not at once confided in him, and Temple promptly explained his brother-in-law's reasons; it was "impossible to continue partys to measures of procrastination and weakness," etc., but he does not, he says, with a note of clumsy raillery, advise Denbigh to resign too. Denbigh had no intention of doing so: he lets Bute know that he desires rather to be "still more close to the King," so he is made a Gentleman of the Bedchamber. After this he may be reckoned upon as zealous to support His Majesty's government, and first George Grenville and then Sandwich (as Bedford's man) claims his vote and influence. He extracts an additional office, that of Post-master, from Grenville, and after providing for several friends is deeply *pained* that the Duke of Grafton has not named his cousin a Canon of Westminster. In 1775 Sandwich is still beating him up to vote with—"His Majesty should, and I daresay will, meet with the concurrence of all his real friends in the measures proposed for the reduction of the rebellion in America."

Denbigh's view was that the arrogant independ-

<sup>1</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., 1911, Denbigh Papers.



ence of the House of Lords was the reason of the failure of the King's measures, and that "sending a Duke or any peer or two to the Tower would go further towards settling matters in America than winning a battle."

As for the hard work of North's ministry, that and the necessary obloquy fell mostly, and with perfect justice, to the men of the old Bedford party—to Sandwich, case-hardened to any scorn, to Weymouth, indemnified by money for any ignominy, to Rigby, who never had had a character to lose, and to the strong man of the ministry, Lord George Sackville, or Germain, as his name became after Walpole's friend, lively old Lady Betty, bequeathed to him a great fortune.<sup>1</sup>

Sackville's name is written large in national disasters during the eighteenth century. The man who at Minden, as Walpole curtly puts it, "sacrificed himself to sacrifice Prince Ferdinand," was not likely to be stayed on his path by the remonstrances of statesmen or journalists. The knowledge that Sackville was a *persona grata* to the young king and to his mother, the probability that he directed the politics of his brother, the Duke of Dorset, and of his family and dependants, and the conviction of his strong will and perseverance, caused him to be a personage whom would-be ministers—Bute, Grenville, Bedford, North, took pains to conciliate. Grenville was careful to explain to him all the steps of his negotiations with

<sup>1</sup> Lord George Sackville, afterwards Lord George Germain, was eventually raised to the peerage as Lord Sackville.

the other leaders. Bute almost tearfully tried to conciliate his patience when George III's prudence—or maybe Bute's own—deferred the moment of conferring office and public favour upon one still terribly unpopular as the officer who had refused to fight at Minden. But by 1767 Lord George was secure in the royal favour, which he retained till death. He was indeed a man after the King's own heart, inflexible in maintaining royal authority, coercion, and rigidity, as well as a fond husband and kind father. He therefore avowed his position, disconcerted ministers by opposing their candidate in his local borough, and assured his private friend and agent, Irwin, that the King would bestow a mark of his favour upon him.

Sober and self-controlled, Sackville was master of a wide range of dignified professional terminology which enabled him to say perfectly clearly to one what to another he denied with icy hauteur. His arrogance was as enormous as that of the Grenvilles, if it was not always so openly revealed, and found its vent in the contempt which is his usual attitude to genius, enthusiasm, or extravagance: towards Chatham, or Granby (the popular hero who did charge at Minden), or the Townshends: the only right things Granby recommended, he writes, were effects of General Harvey's influence, "but his influence cannot prevent the promises which are exacted from his Lordship in the midst of riot and dissipation." Sackville's illwill was unrelenting, and by a combination of misrepresentation, neglect, and brazen assertion he knew how

to ruin, or at least render helpless, the unlucky rival who had incurred his enmity, as his letters show, and Sir Guy Carleton discovered.

Sackville's undoubted energies were by no means always spent upon the work, even the most important work, of his office. When he was in office in Ireland, his domineering injustice, says Walpole significantly, "certainly provoked Ireland to *think*." When he became, by the King's especial choice, Secretary for the Colonies, and responsible for the American war, he left, says his trusty confidant, Knox, the entire conduct of the military business to the Under-Secretary at War.<sup>1</sup> This man, having arranged with General Burgoyne the details of the expedition which afterwards closed so disastrously at Saratoga, forgot to send to General Howe the order to co-operate with him. Sackville came to the Office in a hurry, on his way to the country, solely to sign the letters: "I observed to him that there was no letter to Howe to acquaint him with the plan or what was expected of him in consequence of it. His Lordship started, and D'Oyly stared, but said he would in a moment write a few lines. "So," says Lord Sackville, "my poor horses must stand in the street all the time, and I shan't be to my time anywhere." Whereupon D'Oyly offered to take charge of the whole of this crucially important matter, without troubling Sackville, "and with this his Lordship was satisfied, as it enabled him to keep his time, for he could never bear delay or disappointment."

<sup>1</sup> H.M.C., 1909, Various, vi, p. 277.

Sackville was probably the one Minister who really agreed with George III in refusing to recognize the Independence of America. North, in 1782, intending to give up the impossible struggle, and perceiving no reason against eating all his own words, reversing his entire policy and abiding still in office, told the King that Sackville was the only minister who "must go out" because of his avowed principle that the sovereignty over America must be retained.

" 'If you mean by his going out,' said the King, 'to relinquish that principle you must make other removes.'

" 'No,' replies Lord North, 'for no one else has declared that principle.' 'Yes,' says the King, 'you must go further; you must remove ME.' "

The dilemma was clearly beyond North's solving, and he resigned.

The interest and almost liking which Horace Walpole felt for Sackville was probably partly due to his friendly conduct towards the unfortunate Duke of Gloucester, partly it was called forth by the steadiness with which Sackville always held to the line he had chosen or the friend he had once trusted. His contempt for general opinion and for the populace was entirely to Walpole's taste, though in the great question of America he could not approve Sackville's policy of coercion—and a coercion which was ineffectual.

The "American business" and the national disgraces of that war were not of the type of politics to which Walpole had been accustomed, and he

could not unravel such tangled clues. He belonged to a generation which had hardly regarded political decisions as concerned with great issues; that principle might count for something in the actions of nations was perhaps only understood by the two exceptions to the age, Chatham and Burke, and Chatham seemed to have spent his anguished life and mighty energies in vain, while Burke was a prophet crying in a wilderness where even Horace Walpole, inclined to agree with his conclusions, did not hearken. The whole epoch of the American war and the disasters it inflicted upon us in America and Europe witnessed to the paltriness of English parties and the result of their triumph in securing place and emolument by the easy sacrifice of their country.

Walpole beheld the long catastrophe of shame with impotent grief. He became an old man before its close. Without recognizing the great principles at stake he understood clearly enough the baser personal motives which had so broken up the aristocratic oligarchy as to leave both America and England at the mercy of such a king as George III and such agents as the *King's Friends*. And he summed up that prologue to disaster with the very essence of dramatic brevity in the inimitable and, surely, immortal "Sketch of a New Method of Writing History" which occurs in his "Last Journals":

The Members of both Houses said to themselves, "This peace will be as shameful as the Treaty of Utrecht."

Mr. Fox said, "Give them twenty-five thousand pounds, and they will change their note."

Both Houses said, "It is an excellent peace."

His mother said, "Now my son is King of England."

Sir Francis Dashwood<sup>1</sup> said, "I am an old apple woman, and I will lay a tax on Cider."

The Western Counties said, "It is a partial tax."

The City said, "We will go to St. James's, and petition that the tax may not be passed."

Lord Bute said, "Fifty thousand men will come to St. James's and tear me to pieces, and though I have prepared the epitaph for my tomb, I am frightened out of my wits at the thought of death; I will say I have no stomach, and I will go to Harrowgate."

Mr. Wilkes said, "The mother and Lord Bute! . . . There is a lie in the speech."

. . . . .

"I will stand for Middlesex," said Wilkes. "We will choose you," said the county. "He shall not sit," said the House of Commons. "You have no right to hinder him," said the law. "They have," said the lawyers.

"We will choose him again," said the county. "It will be to no purpose," said the courtiers.

"Colonel Luttrell shall stand," said Lord Bute, "We will not choose him," said the county. "We will say you did," said the House of Commons.

"Is a minority more numerous than a majority?" said the Opposition. "Not *in* the House of Com-

<sup>1</sup> Bute's Chancellor of the Exchequer.



mons, thank God," said the majority, "but we will say it is anywhere else."

"We will petition against a House of Commons who can be bribed to contradict arithmetic," said counties and towns. "Do so," said Mr. Wedderburn, "and I will draw the Remonstrance."

"I will not dissolve a Parliament that has disgraced itself for my sake," said the \* \* \* \*

"You are a corrupt and scandalous assembly," said Sir George Savile, "I thought so last night and I think so this morning."

"We think so, too," said the assembly, by their silence.

"The House of Commons has acted illegally," said the Chancellor, Lord Camden.

"Give me the Great Seal," said the King.

"You shall be Chancellor," said the Duke of Grafton to Lord Mansfield. Lord Mansfield said, "I dare not."

"I will be Chancellor," said Norton. "Your character is too bad," said everybody. "You are good enough to be our Speaker," said the House of Commons.

"You shall be Chancellor," said the King to Yorke. "I have vowed I would not," said Yorke. "You never shall be so if you will not now," said the King; "and I will make your younger son a peer if you consent." "I will," said Yorke.

"How could you break your word?" said his brother. "I am distracted," said Yorke. . . .<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Charles Yorke, Hardwicke's younger son, died suddenly, apparently by suicide, but probably from agitation.



"I will not give his son the peerage," said the King.

"I cannot find a Chancellor," said the Duke of Grafton, "I must resign." "Do so," said Lord Gower, and Rigby, and Bradshawe.<sup>1</sup>

"Odd man, odd man!"<sup>2</sup> said the King. "Coming, Sir," said Lord North.

"Since we cannot have a sensible man for Chancellor, we must take a fool," said the King. "Your Majesty is very good," said Lord Bathurst.

<sup>1</sup> His ministerial supporters of the Bedford gang.

<sup>2</sup> A sedan chair porter in want of a mate raised this call.

## VIII

### “MY DUCHESSES ”

AT no epoch has the course of English history been sensibly affected by the machinations of native feminine politicians. Only foreign agents—and that but seldom—have metwith success in the field. Nor, until the latter half of the eighteenth century, did political intrigue provide a game at which great ladies would hanker to play. No doubt it was the passion for imitating French fashions which had once allured the Duchess of Queensberry to make faint efforts in this direction, but from “Prior’s Kitty” to the beautiful Georgiana of Devonshire, such efforts were but spasmodic and weak, no more than a temporary fashion. The English great ladies were not whole-hearted in the game, and would not devote themselves to the task sufficiently to bring their salons and political manœuvres up to even a working level.

By common consent, it seems, a Duchess was required to inaugurate a new fashion. It may perhaps have been an item in George III’s system of dealing with the nobility to emphasize more than in former times the superior claims and prestige of high rank in the peerage. Young Queen Charlotte was attended by four duchesses, and

society seems to have acquiesced in the notion of a duchess being entitled to some independence and originality.

The Duchesses of Norfolk and Bedford are the first who are noticed as aspiring to lead politically. But the former was very ill-seconded at home. Walpole laughed at "my Lord Duchess" and her political parties: "All the company afraid of the Duchess, and the Duke afraid of all the company."

The more successful Gertrude, Duchess of Bedford, was of such notoriety as to draw on herself the savage sneers of Junius. She probably had some natural talent for diplomacy and intrigue, as the niece of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and the daughter of the first Earl Gower, who was through life a trusted courtier of George II. She was sister of the second Earl Gower, who enjoyed easy and most lucrative posts for thirty-four years owing to his skill in "ratting" at the critical moment. Nevertheless she was a poor dissembler.

Her Grace, an inveterate match-maker, frequently with an ulterior motive, was annoyed by the excellent marriage made by Walpole's niece, the beautiful Maria, with Lord Waldegrave, and showed it, as Walpole told Montagu: "We had played late at loo at Lady Jane Scot's; I came downstairs with their two Graces of Bedford and Grafton: there was no chair for me; I said I would walk till I met one. 'Oh!' said the Duchess of Grafton, 'the Duchess of Bedford will set you down': there were we charmingly awkward and complimenting;



THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE AND HER CHILD, GEORGIANA, AFTERWARDS  
COUNTESS OF CARLISLE

FROM THE PAINTING BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS



however, she was forced to press it and I to accept it—in a minute she spied an hackney-chair—‘Oh! there is a chair,—but I beg your pardon, it looks as if I wanted to get rid of you, but indeed I don’t—only I’m afraid the Duke will want his supper.’—You may imagine how much I was afraid of making him wait.” Another great lady who chose to cavil at the Waldegrave-Walpole match was the witty Lady Townshend; but she was a friend of Horace Walpole, and he conciliated her approval in the end, he says, by allowing her to choose his wedding raiment, which she insisted should be terribly brilliant.

Few of the great ladies as yet followed the example of their Graces of Norfolk and Bedford in mingling with political cabals; it is not till the latter half of the long reign of George III, the epoch of the Prince of Wales and of rollicking young bloods, that peeresses’ names—Devonshire or Gordon, Hertford or Jersey—become familiar in political literature.

There was ample scope for the commanding talents of a duchess in easier and pleasanter spheres. The learned and poetical Dr. Young, already quoted, doubtless only expressed a general sentiment in his own beautiful manner when he addressed to his benevolent Duchess of Portland a rhapsody of self-congratulation upon his new intimacy with two duchesses at once.

“To be courted by a Duchess in my old age [he was fifty-eight] is a very extraordinary fate. Should I tell it to my parishioners, they would

never believe one word I spoke to them from the pulpit afterwards: I lie therefore under a terrible dilemma: I must either burst by stifling this secret, or make atheists of my whole neighbourhood. Such scrapes as this should teach the world the wholesome lesson of humility, and never to covet blessings that are too great for them," etc.; and again, more seriously: "If your Grace sees the Duchess of Kent, please to let her know that there was more virtue in her enquiring after me than she perhaps imagines; that there is an unextinguishable ambition in man which is highly gratified by such honours, shown by some sort of persons, and that I shall enter it in that short inventory of goods which Fortune allots me— 'That I was remembered in absence by the Duchess of Kent.' " <sup>1</sup>

Horace Walpole, who hated lady politicians, was also happy in the friendship of a duchess or two among the circle of bright beings whom he loved to entertain, visit, and correspond with.

There was, in the first place, the beautiful and warm-hearted Duchess of Grafton, wife of Conway's early friend, the Duke of Grafton, Chatham's stalking horse, and Junius's victim. There was the Duke of Richmond's lovely, but rather characterless, partner, and there was that charming member of Horry's own family whom he admired, helped, and fidgeted over like a favourite daughter,

<sup>1</sup> Hist. MSS. Comm., 1904, Marquess of Bath's Papers, i, pp. 264-5.



Maria, Lady Waldegrave, afterwards Duchess of Gloucester.

Walpole was always convinced that his three duchesses were the most beautiful beings in the galaxy of English beauty, that is, of all beauty, for he hardly allowed to French and Italian fashion the possession of true loveliness. And when others shone he often observes that it was due to the absence of his divinities.

The Duchess of Grafton, “so superior to earthly duchesses,” at all events, possessed other claims than beauty alone to his regard, and as years went on became more and more of an intimate friend. His letters to her are usually without the touches of banter which give more or less an air of unreality to his professions towards other lady correspondents. She was the only woman friend of the fastidious critic who stepped out of the paths of rectitude and propriety. Yet Walpole thought none the less of her. In truth, on a cursory view of the times of George III it seems as if half the peerage were divorcing and re-marrying, and, except for Queen Charlotte’s public receptions at the Drawing-rooms, very little importance seems to have been attached to such adventures. The wives of the Duke of Grafton, and Lords Carmarthen, Bolingbroke, Anglesea, Cowley, and Derby, certainly endured excessive provocation from husbands as noteworthy in the sphere of dissolute gallantry as in the more public paths of diplomacy or war, before they resorted to the only revenge open to them and eloped. Divorce

and re-marriage (usually with "the hero of the piece") followed as rapidly as possible, except where, as with poor Lady Derby, the eloping gallant was no man of honour.

Walpole, who had taken a fancy to the Earl of Upper Ossory and praises him in several letters as a young man much superior to the average, rather energetically disclaims the "credit" of having helped to bring together the amiable Irish peer and the beautiful Duchess, but he was not sorry for the alliance, which gave happiness to his charming Duchess, to whom nobody could ever have thought the dissolute Grafton at all suited.

When he had lost his older friends, Lady Suffolk and Lady Hervey, and was grown an elderly man, Lady Ossory became his principal lady correspondent, and to her and Lady Ailesbury he wrote freely of himself, his domestic affairs, his health, and of the gossip and social events of town, for both ladies lived very much in the country, with their quiet country-loving husbands.

"I know no more of America than the ministers do," he tells Lady Ossory in 1777. "It is not quite fashionable to talk of that. The tone is, just to ask with an air of anxiety, if there is anything new, and then to be silent."

"I do not know that the Duchess of D[evonshire] has been positively ill. She thought her nerves were much affected, but it proved to be only a disorder on her spirits, occasioned by her being tired of Chatsworth. She is much better since her removal."

This was the famous beauty, or rather, says Walpole, “the empress of fashion,” and no beauty at all, but a very fine woman with all the freshness of youth and health—and an air which captivated. “Last night,” he writes to Lady Ossory, “I was at a ball at the Lady’s Club. It was all goddesses, instead of being a resurrection of dancing matrons as usual. The Duchess of Devonshire effaces all without being a beauty; but her youth, figure, flowing good-nature, sense, and lively modesty, and modest familiarity, make her a phenomenon.” She continued to lead the fashion for several years, famous in politics, in pleasures, and in painting. It was so much the fashion to possess her portrait that all the prints of the famous picture of her were seized upon instantly, and her little foibles, even the effects of her illnesses, were imitated by the zealous.

The elevation of Horace Walpole’s favourite niece to ducal rank, and royal ducal rank, too, could not but afford him a species of subtle pleasure, however earnestly he might disdain such a feeling, and in spite of the intricate difficulties of behaviour in which he seemed to find himself entangled by her marriage, difficulties from which he was eminently well fitted to extricate himself.

Sir Edward Walpole was one of many scions of nobility who, clinging to unmarried freedom, found himself genuinely in love with his mistress, and lived with her in a regular and happy domesticity. She was a lovely and modest milliner’s apprentice, whom, after he had with considerable difficulty

persuaded to his wishes, he would have been only too glad to be able to marry. But fear of his autocratic father, on whose generosity he was wholly dependent, and who would have disinherited a son who should so far disgrace himself, prevented Sir Edward from ever doing this justice to the mother of his children. Sir Robert Walpole outlived her—to marry his own mistress and procure from George II the rank of an Earl's daughter for their illegitimate child—and all that Sir Edward could do for his daughters, to whom he was most fondly attached, was to educate them with every care and provide each with a portion of £10,000. They were charming girls, beautiful, cultivated, and of gentle and virtuous temper. One very safely married a clerical Keppel, soon to be a Bishop; one (as already mentioned) became Lady Dysart, and Maria, the most beautiful, was sought by the worthy middle-aged Lord Waldegrave. Horace Walpole had a high opinion of the honour and good sense of Lord Waldegrave and experienced something of a blow when the good man, after only a few years of wedded life, caught the smallpox and died, nursed to the last with utmost devotion by his young wife. Walpole could not help telling her, "My dear child, there never was a nurse of your age had such attention." "There never was a nurse of my age had such an object," she replied. Her desolate position afterwards, in ill health, with her little children, and all the business of a devolved estate on her hands, was sufficiently pathetic. Her uncle did his best for her,

and gave himself, as he always was ready to do for his family, great trouble over her affairs. He carried her off to recuperate at Strawberry Hill, and his attention to her, it seems, led to his discovery of the charm of Lord Herbert of Cherbury's autobiography. He and Gray tried reading the MS. (which Walpole had borrowed) aloud to her, thinking to divert her thoughts—"and could not get on for screaming and laughing."

Much averse as was the beautiful widow from reappearing in the fine world, she was counselled to do so for the sake of her daughters, and speedily found herself more sought after than before. Unexceptionable offers of marriage were made to her, but when she refused a very respectable duke, society felt convinced that the persistent admiration of the King's brother, the Duke of Gloucester, had met with more return than society had thought likely.

In fine, the Duke and the dowager Lady Waldegrave had obviously joined forces: very shocking—or were they privately married? There was the difficulty for her uncle Horace. He could not countenance impropriety in a niece, and that niece the oft eulogized widow of the admirable Waldegrave: he could not assume her to be the Prince's wife, for that would suggest that he had private knowledge of the fact—and in truth Maria had given him a hint sufficient to calm his mind—and to allow that he was satisfied of her virtue would be as bad as betraying the secret which the Duke was so carefully preserving for the benefit of his

brother the King. Walpole contrived to baffle the curiosity of friends and correspondents by professing a melancholy ignorance, while he treated his niece with as much fondness as if no Duke existed, and the Duke with the same reverential courtesy as if no lady were involved in the case. He sat on the fence with the grace he habitually imparted to that attitude. He called it prudence.

Of course in the end the secret came out, as everybody knew it must. When the amiable young King came to the throne the first persons to feel the rein of authority were his brothers and sisters. George II had provided an independence for the Duke of York, but the others were still under their mother's strict tutelage when the old King died, and when at length full age removed her restraint, they found that their brother did not intend to open to them any kind of career. Each prince had a title, a small allowance, sufficient, perhaps, for a country gentleman to live on, a regiment and some very small sinecure office. It was impossible for Cumberland or Gloucester to aspire to the hand of a German princess. Celibacy, idleness and a bachelor's pocket money was the lifelong provision destined for them by George III. York died early. Cumberland soon earned a bad name among the worser dissipations of society. Gloucester, by temperament respectable, domestic, and very timid, sought an honourable private happiness with the beautiful Lady Waldegrave, but dared not own to the King that he was wedded to a woman outside the pale of royalty.



But Cumberland contracted a marriage with a certain ill-bred Mrs. Horton, and when the monarch's wrath blazed out in fury, Gloucester felt it only honourable to acknowledge his own marriage. The King's assumption that his brothers had behaved criminally, almost treasonably, in perpetrating marriage without asking his consent—a consent they knew would not be given—is of some historical importance, as leading to the astonishing “Royal Marriage Act.” To Gloucester and his wife it meant years of profound distress, the former aware that in the event of his death—and he had wretched ill health—his wife and the two children would be totally without provision, the Duchess grieving that she should be the cause of her husband's melancholy position.

They betook themselves abroad, to find the courtesy and society denied at home, where George III ordered that no one who visited the Duke of Gloucester should dare to come to court, and long made their home at Rome—“the only place where the Pretender and I can live,” said the Duke, with truth and sarcasm.

Horace Walpole used what little influence he could exert on behalf of the Gloucesters. He was ready to give advice, to write to their one friend in the ministry, Sackville, with suggestions for softening the King's heart, and he sent touching letters of sympathy. But he counselled Conway to be “prudent” and not to visit them until an ostensible forgiveness was at length extended to the Duke by George III. Walpole chides Mann for



being so much taken by the Duchess's charm that he had forgotten to observe her remarkable beauty. He coveted praise for her, and was almost satisfied when, after the reconciliation of the royal brothers in 1780, and the return of the Duke and Duchess to England, his niece proved quite able to hold her own in society. The Duchess of Bedford, still formidable though a dowager, in 1788, "had a mind to go to Gloucester House, but declared she could not till an affair was arranged, for she had had a quarrel with the Duchess of Gloucester in the year *one*. No mortal could guess what she meant,<sup>1</sup> nor do I know yet, for her Grace of Bedford herself was not born in 1700, nor the Duchess of Gloucester till 1735. The latter said they never could have had a quarrel, for they never had been intimate enough. This anachronism (in her Grace's memory) has somehow or other been rectified, and she has been at Gloucester House."

As a confirmed bachelor, Horace Walpole naturally regarded a little arrant flirtation as something of an amusement, and his flames were so openly acclaimed, and, besides, so eminently safe, that scarce a child could be deceived. Foremost among them were the masculine and eccentric Mrs. Anne Pitt, sister of the great statesman, and Lady Mary Coke, widow of the half insane and wholly ignoble Lord Coke, from whom she early separated. Walpole was a good friend and wise adviser of Anne Pitt, whose commissions he did not shirk, and of whose erratic, but not always sane, career he never

<sup>1</sup> The Duchess's slang was clearly in advance of Walpole's.

speaks unkindly. He was the acknowledged *beau*, a kind of humorous opera *beau*, of Lady Mary, and contrived for a lifetime to fill this parlous position with unfailing credit, never himself comical, though the heroine came to rank among the burlesque characters of Europe.

Lady Mary Coke filled a considerable space in her world with incessant agitation. A woman of strong native talent and determination, she was wedded by her parents to one of the great fortunes of England, a ferocious boor, half lunatic, half savage. By her own queer methods she extricated herself—methods due as much to a high-born girl's ignorance of the ways of law and the world as to a taste for peculiarity; and thereafter she flitted about the courts of Europe, all of which were open to the daughter of the Duke of Argyle, the foremost peer of the British monarchy.

In English society the Duke of Argyle's daughter possessed a further claim of her own to consideration by virtue of her strikingly original character. Like every great lady we hear of she was, of course, a beauty, and her vehement championship of odd ideas—of chivalry, morality, or, again, of simplicity of living, early rising, and manual work, was entertaining. Unluckily, as time went on her originality, like Anne Pitt's, or the Duchess of Queensberry's, became so eccentric, so absurd, as to suggest more than a little rent in the garment of common sense. It was a noticeable feature among the very wealthy; men grew morose or committed suicide, women developed flightiness. The

cause was identical: great wealth, without duty or responsibility, and a deference to rank which encouraged the greatly born to give full play to every extravagant whim.

The particular bent of Lady Mary's semi-insanity was directed by her self-esteem. Her liveliness and beauty attracted considerable attention for a while from George III's younger brother, the excitable Duke of York, and Lady Mary behaved as his lady-love, and wrapped herself in so much mystery that on the Duke's early and sudden death she assumed the airs of a heroine of tragedy, and endeavoured to pose as a kind of private widow, her obsession leading her to such ridiculous lengths as, finally, to make it impossible for her good-natured but dignified old friend Princess Emily, who had again and again overlooked her impertinence, to continue to receive her.

Lady Mary, as might be expected from Jenny Warburton's daughter, had no sense of proportion or of humour, and would swallow the crudest flattery. To chaff her was irresistible, and by general consent she was fair game. She would harangue, moralize, and ride the high horse; herself extremely well informed, she would correct a slipshod statement with the air of a reformer convicting a lie. She almost, wrote her old acquaintance, Lady Louisa Stuart, "lowered the tone of thinking in those connected with her as 'Don Quixote' did in his readers. Every act or opinion bordering on the great, the noble, the dignified, everything elevated above the conceptions of the

common ‘worky-day world,’ had a chilling shadow of ridicule cast over it as ‘just suited to Lady Mary Coke.’ ”

Once, after she had been airing her superiority in the presence of Princess Emily, and then professed to believe that her Royal Highness was offended, that shrewd personage proceeded to give her a hint. Ignoring the supposition that she, a King’s daughter, could take any offence at the vagaries of Lady Mary, her Highness wrote to assure her that

“One so greatly born must allwais be well come at my Table, & is constantly expected of Tuesdays, provide she will be a little less contradicting and hide her great ability’s from those she thinks are inferior to hers . . .”

Horace Walpole could always flatter Lady Mary to the top of her bent: will she accept his request, he asks, for a little farm? “You must, since I consider you as a minister, and the only one of whom I would ask a favour.” If, as an old friend, he ventures to counsel prudence, it is in terms of flattery or banter which she would take for serious compliment:

“It is the Emperor’s turn to come after your Ladyship,” he writes in 1771, “can we expect him if you carry to him what is most worth seeing in England? he does not deserve your visit when he had a vacant throne to offer you, and yet let you slip out of his hands. There is not an instance in Romance of such a neglect. . . . Shall the Duke

of Argyle's daughter run up and down Europe like the wandering Jew? Choose your kingdom and reign there, and though I shall certainly die of it, I wish to see you settled and crowned once for all. Your glory is dearer to me than loo at Notting Hill [her country house], and even than all my rash hopes. For your sake I could sacrifice my darling view of tending a few sheep with you on our two hills, but I cannot bear to see you return so often without a diadem. 'Or Caesar or nothing,' said Borgia. 'Be Caesar's wife or mine,' say I. Caesar has not done his part. My heart is still at your service, but I am off if you offer it to Caesar once more. Nay, I will not be pacified though you should pretend the visit is only to his mother. Nobody but I goes to see an old woman more than once. If you think of Vienna again, I marry Madame du Deffand, and will no longer be your Ladyship's

"Constant and Eternal Adorer,

"Hor. Walpole."

Lady Mary's strictures upon the ignorance of other people were probably often well deserved, to judge by some of the tales. Her sister, Lady Greenwich, being one day in conversation with Lady Tweeddale, happened for some reason to name the Saxons. "The Saxons, my dear!" cried the Marchioness, "Who were they?" "Lord, Madam, did your Ladyship never read the History of England?" "No, my dear; pray, who wrote it?"



HORACE WALPOLE, EARL OF ORFORD. AGED 76

FROM A PENCIL DRAWING BY G. DANCE





It is, however, just possible that Lady Tweeddale aired her stupidity in order to tease Campbells, for she insisted upon congratulating the beautiful Duchess of Argyle on the not very brilliant marriage of her not very satisfactory second daughter with, “Well, my dear, but am I to wish you joy on Lady Augusta’s marriage?”

*Duchess.* “No great joy, Madam; there was no great occasion for Lady Augusta Campbell to be married.”

*Marchioness.* “Lord, my dear, I wonder to hear *you* say so, who have been married twice.”

Lady Mary Coke and Miss Pitt and Lady Ailesbury and many another correspondent vanish from the pages of Horace Walpole’s letter-books as advancing age, or failing sanity removed them from the reach of friendship. But Lady Ossory continued to the end his firm friend, and the last two notes from the old man’s hand are to her—in January 1797.

During the last half-dozen years of his life, his letters are increasingly, and at length totally, addressed to his female friends, to whose number he was even able in old age to add; not only Miss Hannah More, but a charming young pair of sisters.

Mary and Agnes Berry, who with their father had come to reside near Strawberry Hill, were a veritable godsend to the old, but still lively and most sociable wit. He was to them as a mentor, a courtier, and a grandfather, and most of the happiness which still accompanied his peaceful and intellec-

tual days was due to their interest and affection. For them he wrote memoirs of his earlier life, and countless letters on every imaginable topic. When their father took them travelling, he worried over every possible mishap in an abandon of domestic terror. When they came home he besought their presence, and adorned their lodgings like a lover.

Horace Walpole apparently succeeded in the principal aim of his life. Few are the philosophers of whom it can be recorded with as much truth as of him, that his systematic pursuit of happiness came very near achieving the goal. His rational happiness, which injured none, and scattered a good deal of pleasantness on the paths of others, makes him still a refreshing companion.

"I desire to die when I have nobody left to laugh with me," he had recorded in early life, and fate dealt kindly with him in that respect. An invincible optimist at heart, though a circumstantial pessimist in theory, he had continued through life to "live in a vision as much as I can," and the vision never completely faded.

In his old age the disappearance of the last hopes of continuing the Walpole family certainly grieved him deeply, but, consistently with his lifelong endeavours to share only his cheerfulness—"I love to communicate my satisfactions, my melancholy I generally shut up in my own breast"—he says little on the subject of his wrongheaded family. It was melancholy enough to find himself the last Earl of Orford, the inheritor, too late, of the now scanty relics of his father's estate and treasures.

But he was philosopher enough to smile, and his own epigram on the event sums up sufficiently well his attitude to life.

EPITAPHIUM VIVI AUCTORIS (1792)

An estate and an earldom at seventy-four!  
 Had I sought them or wish't them 'twould add one fear more,  
 That of making a countess when almost four-score.  
 But Fortune, who scatters her gifts out of season,  
 Though unkind to my limbs, has still left me my reason;  
 And whether she lowers or lifts me, I'll try  
 In the plain, simple style I have liv'd in, to die;  
 For ambition too humble, for meanness too high.

## IX

### THE LEGEND OF CHARLES JAMES FOX

**I**T is somewhat remarkable that the epoch of the King who never was young should have offered so wide a political field to young men who never grew up, but it is not to be denied that at no other epoch has Parliament enjoyed so much of the energy and impulse, the brilliance and inconsistency of youth. Charles Townshend has already been mentioned, another shining talent was Charles Yorke, second son of Lord Chancellor Hardwicke, himself at the head of his profession. More practical than Townshend, but as unprincipled, shame, and remorse, and the effects of ill-living hurried him, too, to an early death. Richard Sheridan, already a popular play-wright and manager of his theatre at the age of twenty-four, was an accepted favourite of the House of Commons and of society before he was thirty. Richard Fitzpatrick, the young brother-in-law of Walpole's charming Lady Ossory, though no orator, was as great a wit as any of the others, and a greater beau, famous in society for the exquisite manners and dress which actually won a legacy from "Old Q.," and in parliament as the bosom friend and political director of Charles James Fox.

‘If I went to Almack’s,” wrote Walpole, “and decked out my wrinkles in pink and green, like Lord Harrington, I might still be in vogue; or if I paid nobody, and went drunk to bed every morning at six, I might expect to be called out of bed by two in the afternoon to save the nation, and govern the House of Lords by two or three sentences as profound and short as the Proverbs of Solomon.”

Charles Fox easily outshines the rest of the galaxy of young talent, both in contemporary renown and in the permanence of his importance. The greatest as among the last of those fine gentleman politicians for whom the House of Commons ranked with Newmarket and Almack’s, and who played the game of politics as rather less a game of chance and rather more a game of skill than those of the turf and the gaming-tables, Fox exhibited in perfection two characteristics which his age appreciated highly. In the first place, he was the most magnificent of rakes and wits. He gambled not only for fabulous stakes—others did that, too, but with a total carelessness as to the result which none could equal. Whether he won or lost (he often won on the turf, but his losses at cards and dice were phenomenal), he was unmoved as a mountain or a baby, his jest, his appetite, his sleep were as spontaneous as ever under circumstances such as had driven other young sparks to suicide. His philosophy sprang doubtless from his naturally happy temperament, probably encouraged by a feeling, like that of children, that

somebody somehow would be sure to help, a conviction which proved by no means unfounded, and his indifference secured as much admiration from his friends as the physical endurance which did not so much as wince when twenty-four hours of continuous revelry were the prologue to an arduous day of parliamentary debate in which the reveller's resource and rapidity were more than a match for the rest of the House. Nobody, laughed Walpole, need preach again upon study and preparation, for what results of careful toil ever reached the unpremeditated flights of Fox and Sheridan and Pitt?

These were points in which Charles Fox was easily first among peers who emulated his gifts. But his superiority was evident in a second sphere, in a difference of kind from his contemporaries. In an age when generosity and sentiment were highly appreciated, Fox added to the not unusual declarations of lofty feeling, a sincerity which was unusual. He really did attach importance to justice, liberty, generosity, and similar abstractions usually relegated wholly to the sphere of the ideal. With him these ideas appeared to crystallize into embodiment, and to carry as much weight as, with others, was assumed to belong to wealth or power or revenge.

Thus he saw Liberty personified in the cause of the Americans, or, later, in the French revolutionists. Justice was identified with the action of the British Parliament as then existent, at least, if he led the majority, otherwise, in what would doubtless have been its action would but other

leaders refrain from influencing. Tyranny was, similarly, identified with the House of Bourbon, with George III, or with Warren Hastings. The parties, as he assorted them, were wholly perfect or totally black, though this is an assumption quite usual with politicians and with the very young.

Fox had great natural facility of speech, and he cultivated it, and his judgement, by practising his oratory on the House. It was, in fact, his debating society. He recorded that he had spoken on every evening that he was present, "except one, and I regret that I did not speak on that night too," as the well-known anecdote runs. His style was that of an appeal to reason and common sense supported by good argument and appeal to facts, or what he asserted to be facts. The ring of conviction was in his tones, and the belief that he meant and felt what he professed gave him a predominance with his followers which other sides of his character might not have warranted.

Thus Fox became the exemplar of such of the Grand Whig Party as survived him, and, his defections from his own standard forgotten, and the rest of his character ignored, like the dark side of the moon, he becomes a kind of epic hero to more recent party polemicists who, after the immemorial usage of English Parliament men, have felt it incumbent on them to claim precedents and prophets from a vanished heroic age, and rank themselves gravely under an ancient name, however incongruous with modern meanings.



Among Horace Walpole's younger friends, Charles Fox manifestly interested him more than others. Charles was not only the son of Walpole's old friend Lord Holland, but nephew of his political chief and friend the Duke of Richmond, and closely connected with the Ossorys. Charles's elder brother, Stephen Fox, had married Ossory's sister, and Richard Fitzpatrick, Charles's especial friend and almost *alter ego* was brother to Ossory, and, of course, brother-in-law to Lady Ossory, Walpole's intimate correspondent. Whether as friend of Lord Holland, or of the Ossorys, Walpole was certain to be informed at first hand upon the doings of the brilliant Charles.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the personal charm by which the young genius of Charles Fox captivated so many friends, and which has become almost a household word in history, embalmed as it is in one of the most fascinating of modern biographies. The charm was the more surprising because the lad's father had crowned a life of political turpitude by deliberately destroying his son's morals, a spectacle which had amazed even that hardened age. Apparently Lord Holland, who doted on his brilliant younger son, considered an early practice of debauchery the necessary polish of a fine gentleman, and he carried him straight from Eton to Paris personally to initiate him in dissipation. Two years of alternate study at Oxford and amusement at Paris followed, two more years for the grand tour in France and Italy, and then the youth, at the age of twenty, was provided with a seat in Par-

liament and introduced, fully fledged, into the best society of London, in 1768.

Like other lads of his time, the boy had become a man as fast as possible. But, unlike them, he carried into the world, and in spite of the world all his life retained, some of the pleasantest characteristics of the boy. His converse with friends continued to exhibit the confidence and enthusiasm of youth; he ceased not to love and read poetry—the Latin and Italian poetry of his boyhood and pupilage, fashionable then among cultivated young men. In his talk he candidly revealed himself with “all the openness and simplicity of a child.” In private life most fascinating, such youthfulness was out of place, to say the least, in politics, and at the gaming-table proved perdition.

Accustomed from boyhood to intercourse with men and women of the world, Fox had nothing of the awkwardness and rawness nowadays proper to boyhood. He and his friend Fitzpatrick had no sooner set up together in their fashionable Piccadilly lodgings than they became noticeable among the leaders of *the ton*. They lived in the full round of excitement, stimulated by a super-abundance of the best wine and the company of easy women of beauty and fashion; they danced, raced, and, above all, diced, as experts among the experts.

“The gaming at Almack’s,” writes Walpole in 1770, “which has taken the *pas* of White’s, is worthy the decline of our Empire, or Commonwealth, which you please. The young men of the age lose five, ten, fifteen thousand pounds in an

evening there. Lord Stavordale [nephew of Lord Holland], not one-and-twenty, lost eleven thousand there last Tuesday, but recovered it by one great hand at hazard; he swore a great oath—‘Now, if I had been playing *deep*, I might have won millions.’ His cousin, Charles Fox, shines equally there and in the House of Commons. He was twenty-one yesterday se’nnight; and is already one of our best speakers. Yesterday he was made a Lord of Admiralty. We are not a great age, but surely we are tending to some great revolution.”

They must have possessed magnificent constitutions. Fox’s only corrective for years is said to have been a few weeks’ shooting in the country. Doubtless their constant hard riding was a preservative, though Charles himself disliked that exercise, and seems to have early taken to the “chariots” or curricles then rapidly coming into vogue, whereof Miss Austen depicts the fashions. Horsemanship was an almost necessary corollary of the exciting life, for scarce otherwise could young men transport themselves from Kensington to Almack’s and White’s, from Almack’s to Newmarket, and from Newmarket to Westminster, which is the reason why the turf was then a universal interest among gentlemen.

Charles’s sole bond was soon found insufficient for the great sums he required, and friends were chivalrous enough to bind themselves to pay for him, on the wasteful annuity system then common: “there are advertised to be sold more annuities of him and his society, to the amount of five hundred

thousand pounds a year! I wonder what he will do next, when he has sold the estates of all his friends!" This was in 1772. "Lord Carlisle pays fifteen hundred, and Mr. Crewe twelve hundred a year for him—literally for him, being bound for him, while he, as like Brutus as Caesar, is indifferent about such paltry counters." He was "already so like Julius Caesar that he owes an hundred thousand pounds."

As the son of a "millionaire," Charles Fox knew not what it was to be hampered by necessity or prudence. Indeed men of much less wealth than he could draw upon never considered money, hoping always that luck would save them in the end, and knowing that if real embarrassment arrived, their fashion would secure an heiress as soon as wanted. We know from Miss Burney, Miss Austen, and Walpole himself, that the *beau* had only to throw the handkerchief.

But young Fox's clumsy attempt to find an heiress stirred a great deal of mirth. He betook himself to a fashionable fortune-teller, a Mrs. Grieve, who "promised him a Miss Phipps, a West Indian fortune of £150,000. Sometimes she was not landed, sometimes had the smallpox. In the meantime, Miss Phipps did not like a black man;<sup>1</sup> Celadon must powder his eyebrows. He did, and cleaned himself. A thousand Jews thought he was gone to Kingsgate [his father's country

<sup>1</sup> Charles Fox had a remarkably dark complexion. He was also—even already—very slovenly; it seems to have been a fashion with *ci-devant* fops.

place] to settle the payment of his debts. Oh no! he was to meet Celia at Margate. To confirm the truth, the Hon. Mrs. Grieve advanced part of the fortune—some authors say an hundred and sixty, others three hundred pounds—but how was this to answer to the matron?—why, by Mr. Fox's chariot being seen at her door. Her other dupes could not doubt of her noblesse or interest, when the hopes of Britain frequented her house. In short, Mrs. Grieve's parts are in universal admiration, whatever Charles's are."

In spite of this little fiasco the money dealers still stood Charles's friends, for he seemed not unlikely to be the eventual heir of whatever was left of his father's fortune, for his elder brother was as yet childless, and Lord Holland, himself as profoundly unpopular in society and at Court as with the populace, appeared to rejoice in having so fashionable a spendthrift of a son.

Henry Fox had earned his peerage by "managing" the Houses for the King and Bute during the difficulties over the Peace of Paris. As usual, the scandal of bribery was conveniently held to attach, not to the venal members who sold themselves, but to the politician who tempted their tottering virtue. Fox, besides, had thrown over his party, and joined the ministers he had persecuted with unusual effrontery, and he had, by taking unscrupulous advantage of every precedent and loophole, accumulated for himself a gigantic fortune by manipulating the public funds which went through his hands as Paymaster. "I don't

care how much I am hated," he had declared in 1762, "if I can say to myself I did His Majesty such honest and essential service." Nobody else, not even George III, endorsed the word *honest*, and Henry Fox, now Lord Holland, but, to his bitter indignation, only a baron and not an earl, discovered that he did mind being hated, and that for certain kinds of perfidy no oblivion need be expected.

Nevertheless, he must remain a member of the Court party since all others eschewed him, and thus it was as one of the King's Friends that his brilliant son entered North's ministry.<sup>1</sup> He began well—from the royal point of view—speaking for the claims of Luttrell against Wilkes, defending the restrictions on the press, scoffing at the notion of regarding the wishes of *the people* except as voiced by Parliament, refusing to relax the severities of subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles, yet suddenly supporting an attempt for the relief of Protestant Dissenters.

Nobody expects much consistency from twenty-one, even if twenty-one be in the Ministry in partial control of a department of which it is totally ignorant. It was not for ripeness of judgment, but for debating talent, that North had annexed Charles Fox and he was willing to allow youth a little latitude.

Filial piety momentarily interrupted his career, when the Royal Marriage Act was introduced.

<sup>1</sup> The term "tory" applied to the well-known party of King's Friends is historically almost nonsense.



Fox's parents had married against the will of the Duke and Duchess of Richmond, the bride's parents, wherefore their son, on principle, opposed every bill for any regulation of marriages. He resigned his post, spoke against the Act, and even ran a hopeless tilt against Hardwicke's earlier and common-sense Marriage Act. The King's Act was carried, however, and before the end of the year Fox was reinstated in office, this time in the lucrative place of a Junior Lord of the Treasury. His little ebullition of insubordination was considered not only pardonable, but very creditable to the goodness of his heart, and was politically negligible.

But a third exercise of independence followed. The Junior Lord's fierceness in defending the privileges of parliamentary debate against the printers and the public led him to flout North's authority seriously. By holding the Premier to the terms of a hasty remark, he compelled the ministry to commit themselves to a quarrel with the City (in 1774) and a parliamentary defeat, and the King's exasperation caused his dismissal from office. "The famous Charles Fox was this morning turned out of his place for great flippancies in the House towards Lord North," wrote Walpole, "His parts will now have a full opportunity of showing whether they can balance his character, or whether patriotism can whitewash it."

George III judged the young man severely. It was not principle, he asserted, only innate love of opposition, which had moved him; he was irresponsible, that is, unstable, in politics as in vice.



Nor is Walpole's verdict very different: "We seem to be governed by the predominant fashion, gaming," he observes during the Luttrell-Wilkes struggle: "Young Charles Fox, the meteor of these days, and barely twenty-two, is at the head of these strong measures, and equally offends the temperate of his own party and the warm ones of the opposition." Not that Walpole considered that the young firebrand had any deep political object, he was not playing "deep for power," but "more moderate, he only games for an hundred thousand pounds that he has not."

So brilliant was the parliamentary reputation of the young minister that for the sake of hearing his defence of North's India Bill, Walpole broke through his rule of abstention and went to the House of Commons. "Fox's abilities are amazing at so very early a period, especially under the circumstances of such a dissolute life. He was just arrived from Newmarket, had sat up drinking all night, and had not been to bed."

What Walpole, and others, so much admired was "this boy's manly reason." Not flowers of rhetoric, but clear exposition and sound argument, made the fame of Fox, together with a grasp of his subject and rapidity of thought, which made him a most formidable debater; his "liberality of acting," too, was remarkable, "none of the little paltry *finesses* of a statesman."

It was time that a man exhibiting such powers, and a minister of four years' standing, should emerge from irresponsible boyhood, and at twenty-

five take up a more serious attitude. And to a certain extent his dismissal from office by the King had this effect upon Fox. He passed into opposition for a period of eight years, during which the great question of the American colonies gave him an opportunity, which he seemed to embrace heartily, of settling his political principles and line of conduct in the company of Burke and the Rockingham and Richmond Whigs, as well as an opportunity, which he did not embrace, of studying the principles of warfare and of European state-craft.

During those eight years Fox made his reputation; he consistently upheld, with regard to America, the principles of liberty and justice, and castigated thoroughly the ministers—North, Sandwich, Weymouth, Sackville—who consented to entrench themselves in office by royal support and the regular use of corruption and to carry out the royal coercion system regardless of national opinion. His attacks, “marvellous for method and memory,” actually lowered North’s majorities. Walpole liked the ring of genuine conviction and preferred “Charles Fox’s native wood-notes to Burke’s feigned voice.” So high did the credit of the young orator mount, that he was soon recognized as one of the strongest leaders of the opposition, and at the election of 1780 was invited to become member for one of the foremost of the few really independent constituencies, Westminster, where he received the support of his father’s old enemy, Mr. Wilkes.

By this time France, Spain and Holland had

recognized the revolted colonies as an independent State, had entered into alliance with "the United States of America," and made war upon Great Britain. Naval battles were necessary in the Bay of Biscay, off the French coasts, and by the Doggerbank itself. Gibraltar was being besieged, West Indian islands were lost, Minorca, then our more than Malta, was threatened, and in 1782 actually lost. The other maritime powers of Europe were revenging themselves for the Seven Years' War, and scares of invasion agitated the coast towns and the Stock Exchange.

Fox's panacea was first, to recognize the independence of America, then to "revive the system of Chatham," and make a league "against the House of Bourbon" with Prussia, Russia, and the Northern Powers, and he rejoiced openly over the defeats of British arms in America as the just punishment of tyranny. Unluckily for his schemes the Prussian and Russian sovereigns had no desire to league against the House of Bourbon: but that did not affect Fox's theory.

In the meantime his private conduct changed but little. Lord Holland, before his death in 1774, paid in one year some £140,000 towards clearing Charles and his elder brother from debt, besides bequeathing to the former what would have been an ample provision for any other younger son,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ten thousand pounds down, the country house, a rich Irish sinecure (the Clerkship of the Pells), and £200 a year Fox sold the house and also the sinecure—a most improvident proceeding.

“for Julius Caesar not a breakfast.” His mother, then on her deathbed, paid still more for him, but a son had been born to his elder brother, and the usurers clamoured for their money. “I thought this child a Messiah,” laughs Walpole, “who came to foretell the ruin and dispersion of the *Jews*, but while there is a broker or a gamester upon the face of the earth, Charles will not be out of debt.”

Indeed, Fox's extravagance divided with Wilkes the public attention, folks talked only “of Wilkes at the top of the wheel and of Charles Fox at the bottom, all between is a blank.”

On one day (in the winter of 1775) the town resounded with praises of Charles' oratory, as he welcomed the accession of Lord Ossory and Fitzpatrick to the ranks of opposition in “such a pathetic *éloge* . . . that every feeling eye was in tears”; on another, with excitement over the great sale at Holland House, where the brothers, on the death of Lady Holland, put up to auction the famous and costly furniture and rarities. But if the sums he owed were still colossal, so was also the devotion of his friends. Wealthy gamblers often accommodated one another by underwriting each other's debts as a temporary help; the luck was expected to turn, and the loan to be repaid, probably in similar fashion. Fox was so frantic a gamester that he is said often to have played with men of shady reputation, and to have been plundered. The same is said of a yet more notorious hero of dissipation, the Prince of Wales, who was becoming

intimate with Fox during these last years of North's ministry. Lord Foley's heir had bound himself for £40,000 on behalf of Charles Fox, and, as Fox could not pay, and the young Foleys had other great debts of their own, their enormous liabilities produced a public scandal. Fox was not of course technically, only morally, to blame for their ruin and Lord Carlisle's almost ruin. Or rather, in Walpole's eyes, it was Lord Holland who was principally in fault, by having set the example of paying for his sons the enormous sums they lost, so that others assumed similar debts to be affairs of honour which their families must in duty pay, while families acquiesced in the spoliation of their inoffensive members by the folly of others, and the moneylenders, perceiving that fashion protected them, were ready to supply the funds for the dissipation which would in the end enrich them and even made a kind of stock of the liabilities of Fox as, later, of the Prince of Wales, in which speculators bought and sold shares.

An old fashion had been revived, faro (or pharaoh) well known some thirty years before. "My nephew, Lord Cholmondeley, the banker *à la mode*, has been demolished," writes Walpole, in May 1781. "He and his associate, Sir Willoughby Aston, went early t'other night to Brooks's, before Charles Fox and Fitzpatrick, who keep a bank there, were come; but they soon arrived, attacked their rivals, broke their bank, and won above four thousand pounds. 'There,' said Fox, 'so should all usurpers be served!' He did still better; for he

sent for his tradesmen, and paid as far as the money would go. In the mornings he continues his war on Lord North, but cannot break *that* bank." "Mr. Fox is the first figure in all the places I have mentioned; the hero in Parliament, at the gaming table, at Newmarket. Last week he passed four and twenty hours without interruption at all three, or on the road from one to the other; and ill the whole time, for he has a bad constitution, and treats it as if he had been dipped in the immortal river; but I doubt his heel at least will be vulnerable."

Unhappily that generous payment of his tradesmen met with an ill reward. A week or two later, as Walpole came up St. James's Street: "I saw a cart and porters at Charles's door; coppers and old chests of drawers loading. In short, his success at faro has awakened his host of creditors; but unless his bank had swelled to the size of the Bank of England, it could not have yielded a sop apiece for each. Epsom, too, had been unpropitious; and one creditor had actually seized and carried off his goods, which did not seem worth removing. As I returned full of this scene, whom should I find sauntering by my own door but Charles? He came up and talked to me at the coach window, on the Marriage Bill, with as much *sangfroid* as if he knew nothing of what had happened. I have no admiration for insensibility to one's own faults, especially when committed out of vanity. . . . The more marvellous Fox's parts are, the more one is provoked at his follies, which comfort so many



rascals and blockheads, and make all that is admirable and amiable in him only matter of regret to those who like him as I do."

Apparently Walpole attributed to Fox's desperate position the recklessness, as the old Whig of course considered it, which led him to support certain reforming efforts. It was a chief part of the true Whig creed that in Parliament, as by eighteenth-century custom established, inhered that Divine Right of which the Whigs had long since bereft the monarch. It was a creed to which Charles Fox had openly subscribed, and that he, the hope of the young Whigs, should now allow himself to support a demand for a so-called reform in the mode of representation was almost as sad as his other freak of supporting a measure of political liberty to Roman Catholics. To good old Whigs such as Walpole the Quebec Act of 1774 legalizing the exercise of the Roman Catholic religion in Canada was shocking. To offer votes to Catholics in Ireland was still worse—"I have ever been averse to toleration of an intolerant religion,"—while to propose, as did the County Associations (in 1780), annual parliaments, and "to alter the mode of representation," *i.e.*, reform, was revolutionary. "The first would be an alteration of the constitution, and the last a most dangerous violation of it; and very sorry should I be to see either attempted. . . . Lord Shelburne and Charles Fox push them impetuously, though at first both opposed them, but the first *will* stick at nothing to gratify his ambition; and the latter *must* stick at



nothing, so desperate is his situation." Over reform Shelburne and Fox were opposing the Cavendishes, while on the Catholic question Fox, Burke, and Richmond were opposed by Shelburne. Such disagreements within the Opposition, "an universal anarchy of opinion," as it appeared to Walpole, did not, however, weaken their joint resistance to North; Fox in particular taunting Sackville with a complete disregard of parliamentary manners, much as, some years earlier, he had literally driven Lord Clive from the House by shouting abuse at him as 'Catiline,' and so forth. He was a privileged abuser; when a goaded opponent once ventured to retort by a sneer at his own damaged character, the "unprovoked attack gave great offence," and Charles, amid universal sympathy, meekly replied that he acknowledged his own faults and deplored them. He also continued in them. The long expected, long delayed, collapse of North's Ministry came with a sudden crash at length, and after sundry curious negotiations the Rockingham party found themselves in office in May 1782, Fox and Shelburne being the Secretaries of State—a political revolution which Horace Walpole found so surprising that he could only exclaim: "This is *not* the *Lords'* doing, but the *Commons*, and it is marvellous in our eyes!" He hoped, however, that it would secure peace, for Britain was now at war with America, France, Spain, and Holland, and that it might perhaps "save the constitution," not, certainly, by reforming parliament, but by defying the King.

The ousted North was comfortably laughing, as usual: "I was abused for lying *Gazettes*," said he—alluding to the notorious suppression of truth by his ministry—"but there are more lies in this one than in all mine—'yesterday his Majesty *was pleased* to appoint the Marquis of Rockingham, the Duke of Richmond, Mr. Charles Fox, etc.'"

Fox quickly rose to the height of his friends' hopes. Walpole thought him the "master-genius" who must gain the ascendant. "He already shines as greatly in place as he did in opposition, though infinitely more difficult a task. He is now as indefatigable as he was idle. He has perfect temper, and not only good humour but good nature; and, which is the first quality in a Prime Minister of a free country, has more common sense than any man, with amazing parts, that are neither ostentatious nor affected . . . [after comparing him with advantage to Lord North and Chatham] perhaps I am partial to Charles Fox, because he resembles my father in good sense—I wish he had his excellent constitution too; yet his application to business may preserve his life, which his former dissipation constantly endangered." He even gave up gaming and the reformation lasted for three entire months.

Negotiations for the different treaties of peace were at once begun, and also a fundamental revolution in Ireland. The new ministry gave a pointed rebuff to the Lord Lieutenant, Fox's friend Carlisle, and he and his secretary, Eden,<sup>1</sup> resigned. After severely rebuking Eden for his astounding

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Lord Auckland.

proposal to give complete independence to Ireland, Fox in a couple of months himself introduced in the Commons a measure which hastily accomplished that revolution, for it was little less. Ever after he assumed that Irish affairs demanded no further attention. That country had been delivered to its own parliament, a parliament even more venal and sectarian, even less representative and independent, than the British body, and from it alone the Catholic and other claims must seek satisfaction. If they could get none, it was no affair for Fox, nor, he contended, for any British Government.

Before the treaties were concluded, Rockingham was dead, and within five days Charles Fox flung up his post, and with him deserted Burke, Lord John Cavendish, and half the ministry. He was certain that his colleague, Shelburne, whom the King called upon to continue the administration, was about to prove treacherous and break up the party. He therefore broke it up instantly himself. Shelburne replaced Cavendish at the Exchequer by young William Pitt, but he could not replace the Cavendish corps of voters in the Houses.

"I have no hesitation," wrote Walpole, "in saying that I think Mr. Fox the fittest man in England for Prime Minister; I say it aloud and everywhere. But there are points in question at this moment far more important than who shall be Premier." The disorganization of the ministry gravely compromised the terms of peace.

Perhaps it may almost be termed a favourite Whig manœuvre to break up a ministry in the

midst of a national crisis in order to compel a personal concession from the monarch. It had proved successful before. This time, however, it did not. "Mr. Fox's proclamation of his pretensions," Walpole explains to Mann,<sup>1</sup> "which I allow are very good if qualifications gave a right of succession (which he did not indeed directly claim, naming the Duke of Portland for successor to Lord Rockingham, who certainly would not degenerate if insufficiency proved the true heir),—has called forth a rival, who, it was foreseen, must become so sooner or later. Don't you anticipate me, and cry out 'What! Mr. William Pitt?' Yes! he is to be Secretary of State—at two and twenty—that is some glory!" For perhaps the first and only occasion in his long correspondence, Walpole's style seems to labour a little under his excitement, but "how is it possible to fold up chaos in a letter?"

He roundly describes the seceding section as "A meeting of the late Marquis's mutes," assuming "a right of transmitting the sceptre and purse of this nation to whom they pleased, or Lord John [Cavendish] should please; and his Lordship pleased that the Duke of Portland should be the ostensible, and Mr. Fox the real monarch of the Whigs, and Mr. Fox was of the same opinion; not all the rest were . . . we are certainly to have a new War of the Barons, a struggle between the King and some great peers in which the people are to go for nothing." The last passage indicates Fox's double error in tactics. While he had not yet made him-

<sup>1</sup> 7th July 1782.

self indispensable to the people, he had long since alienated the King. It was characteristic that, released by his resignation from the necessity of being serious, he had instantly rushed back to his favourite dissipations. He spent the evening feasting with the Prince of Wales: "They drank royally. Charles went thence to Brooks's, stayed till four in the morning, and it being so early, finished the evening at White's with Lord Weymouth,—'and the evening and the morning and the next day were the first day.' Amen, and so be it!"

For several years Fox and the Prince had been on increasingly friendly, even intimate terms. And if the King's assertion that Fox's bad influence was the main cause of the heir apparent's grave derelictions from decency was exaggerated, or even altogether mistaken, it cannot fairly be called baseless. Fox at the age of thirty-three was no longer a youth (though he seems to be so regarded by his modern apologists), but a man and a politician of finished experience, and the Prince of Wales, aged twenty, and only just released from tutelage, might reasonably be supposed not to be stiffened beyond the possibilities of influence. Fox, too, had made the King his enemy in another manner. He had joined in personal attacks upon the King's political methods, and his sarcasms, as formerly Chatham's upon George II, were of a nature which sank into the royal memory.

George III had, however, a weapon ready to his hand. A year earlier the appearance in parliament of William Pitt had roused apprehension among

Fox's friends. "If Charles Fox could feel," writes Walpole in June 1781, "one should think such a rival, with an unspotted character, would rouse him. What if a Pitt and Fox should again be rivals!" and a lady friend laments the evidently great talents of Pitt, because, as he has an unblemished character, it is to be feared Fox will find him, young as he is, a dangerous rival. Pitt was ten years younger than Fox, who ceases now in the eyes of his contemporaries to be the miraculous youth, while the word *character* comes into frequent use.

What was the *character* which Pitt is at once acknowledged to have, and Fox to lack? On the first glance it appears to be a character for common (but then, at least, very uncommon) sobriety, probity, chastity, and gravity. Pitt had, besides, credit for application and industry. A further difference between the rivals was instantly surmised, and in a couple of years became with the nation a conviction never thenceforth to be shaken. Pitt was a man of duty and business, he devoted his energies to the business of carrying out his duty. Fox was a politician who endeavoured to seize office by any means, and to whom political business was but one interest among many. He "seemed to leave pleasure with regret, and to bestow only spare moments on the government of a nation," wrote Walpole. "I do not believe that he had one black or loose object—it is pity that he was as inattentive to having a good one. He acted as the moment impelled him; but as his conception was just, and his



soul void of malice or treachery, he meditated no ill, but might have advantaged himself and his country more had he acted with any foresight or any plan.”<sup>1</sup>

The melancholy little elegy would have gratified Walpole's shrewd old friend, Madame du Deffand, who years before had drawn for him the true character of Charles Fox as she beheld it, in acid terms which George III would certainly have subscribed. Fox had visited Paris in 1771 with his inseparable Fitzpatrick and ‘Bob’ Spencer, and again in 1774 and 1776, and Madame du Deffand had tried to be pleasant to her beloved Horace Walpole's friend. But she laid her finger at once on his weakness. He saw everything at a glance, she said, but he got only a bird's-eye view, for he took no time to examine. She decided that she would entrust no messages to the young men, far less parcels, “ils seraient tous capables de les perdre.” On a further acquaintance she became more serious, and proceeded to warn Walpole that it was a misfortune to have a fellow countryman of Fox's character.

“ Il a beaucoup d'esprit, j'en conviens, mais c'est un genre d'esprit dénué de toute espèce de bon sens: il n'a pas un mauvais cœur, mais il n'a aucune espèce de principes, et il regarde en pitié tous ceux qui en ont.” She notes that one could not reckon on his accuracy.

Madame du Deffand could assuredly hardly be termed strait-laced, yet it is remarkable how severe her comments upon Fox and Fitzpatrick become.

<sup>1</sup> “ Last Journals,” ii, July 1782.



At first she was simply annoyed by their silliness, as she held their pose of total indifference as to the future, shrewdly observing that they cultivated this contempt of ruin because they fancied it placed them on a loftier plane than other people. Three years later, however, she loses her temper over them: "Charles Fox est un fol, sans mœurs, sans morale, et maintenant sans un sol, je ne le plains pas parcequ'il se glorifie de ses vices et de ses folies." The most unkindest cut is her announcement that the brilliant youth bores her. She distrusts all the Fox family, she says, the wealth of the parents and the dissoluteness of the sons makes them all uninteresting; they verify the proverb, "que ce que vient de la flute s'en retourne par le tambour," though nothing can excuse the bad hearts of the younger generation.

On Fox's third Parisian visit the old lady shook her head: he always seemed to be in a species of intoxication, she said, which did not make for attractiveness: "Qu'est ce que l'esprit sans jugement et sans un grain de bon sens?" She could not feel interested in such utterly wrong-headed men. This time she decides to entrust her letter to them; however, Walpole must be sure to tell Charles Fox "que j'ai écrit beaucoup de bien de lui": she breaks off to wonder what would be the effect if Fox looked into the letter, but no! she cannot think him capable of such treachery. He was not, but he was still capable of forgetting it. He promised to fetch the letter, and he promised to spend a last evening at the Neckars, whither

the aged lady betook herself to say good-bye—but he did neither, and did not even send an excuse.

Madame du Deffand saw how the gambling curse was tainting Fox's nature. It was not only the extravagance of his conduct that she blamed, only beginning to count at a thousand louis, four or five hundred louis are a trifle not worth mentioning: "je ne saurais estimer les fous de cette espèce; il me paraît impossible qu'ils puissent être parfaitement honnêtes gens." Worse than their mad extravagance was their callousness: the prospect of being totally unable ever to pay the debts they contracted so carelessly weighed not a jot with them; such an attitude appeared to the aristocratic French lady "un peu blesser l'exacte probité." It was not scrupulous to accept their friends' help in that manner, "quoique en ruinant leurs amis ainsi qu'ils se ruinent eux-mêmes, ils ont beaucoup de bonté et un bon cœur." It is a pity, she sums up, Charles Fox had plenty of wit, good-nature and ingenuousness, but all this becomes detestable without principles—"je n'ajoute pas sans probité."

There were others who expected still worse of Fox than did Madame du Deffand, and who expressed themselves more crudely. When he was turned out of North's ministry, Walpole told Madame du Deffand, he called himself a martyr for the dignity of Parliament, "Charles the Martyr," jeered the fashionables, but the common people thought he was dismissed because he had stolen public funds.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Lettres de Madame du Deffand," vol. ii, p. 589 *note*.

When William Pitt suddenly appeared as Charles' antagonist, George Selwyn expressed a popular view of the contrast between the rivals by terming them (after Hogarth's celebrated pictures) the Idle and the Industrious Apprentices, and all the considering part of the nation, taxpayers and electors, thought much the same.

Fox had been under no misapprehension as to the serious effect of his disruption of Shelburne's ministry upon the national interests; Walpole asked him if he did not think that France would hear the news with transport: "He replied—Oh, it will do a great deal of mischief." In the same temper, though knowing that it was Shelburne who had succeeded in bringing the King to the necessary recognition of the independence of America, a task which had been beyond North, did he thunder against his insincerity over every detail of the Peace, as if England, with her enemies' fleets in the Channel and the North Sea, was in a position to secure better terms when the negotiating ministers were daily charged by their fellow countryman and ex-associate with deliberate treachery.

Men might well wonder what had been the true worth of Fox's appeals to principle when they heard him taunt Conway with being "*an innocent* who knew nothing, thought nothing, of men, but looked to measures. . . . Mr. Fox not only declared that he regarded men, not measures, but—you will laugh—insisted that the nation calls for the Duke of Portland." Portland's qualification for the premiership, other than being the Duke of

Devonshire's brother-in-law, appeared to lie in his being so poor that the salary would be very acceptable to him; but it was a Whig method to have a nominal figurehead, that the other Ministers might better preserve their equality and balance powers and places among them fairly. Fox's total absorption in personal pique and lack of any sense of responsibility gave sore disappointment to Walpole. "I was on the point of saying to him t'other morning, 'Well, but you must not go and play at taw again!' but I thought it would be impertinent. . . . I did flatter myself that he now was on the high road to all he ought to attain—he would have attained it—but he will neither live to reach the goal, nor, when Parliament is not sitting, take the least pains to promote his own views."

Fox, in truth, could never realize that there was a political world elsewhere than in his House of Commons. Of national feeling he appeared as steadfastly ignorant as any Whig of the past century. However, devoting his energies to the House as his sole political world, he suddenly succeeded (in 1783) in jockeying himself into office for a few months, and remaining in opposition for practically the rest of his life.

It had been one of the articles of accusation hurled by Fox at the perfidious Shelburne that he was meditating a combination with the unconstitutional minister who had perpetrated the American War, North. Suddenly Fox and North announced their own coalition against Shelburne, carried motions against him, and drove him to resign. The

treaties were not yet all signed, but for six weeks the country was without a government. Then the King gave in and admitted to office his renegade one-time friend and servant, North, and his peculiar aversion, Fox, sheltered under the name of the nonentity Portland, and supported by all the influence of the houses of Cavendish, Russell, Keppel, and Townshend. Burke followed Fox, and so did his and the Prince's boon companion, Sheridan. "My son's ministry," the King sarcastically termed it.

It was no unusual proceeding for two of the aristocratic cliques to combine against a third, and had indeed been the constant rule before 1770, but there were reasons why this particular coalition shocked men's political consciences violently.

North and Fox had been for eight years absolutely opposed on vital questions of policy; if Fox's passionate conviction of North's treason to the constitution, of North's personal responsibility for coercion, injustice and tyranny was so easily forgotten, what permanence might prove to be in his other convictions? While North, who had been the King's right hand for twelve years in the royal "management" of the constituencies and the members, was now to carry to the opposite camp, which had for so long declaimed against that management, the knowledge, and undoubtedly the methods which had been for the past twelve years so efficacious. The King might well hold North as personally little better than a traitor.

Elaborate excuses were made for the coalition

Like the elaborate excuses for Lord Holland's colossal fortune, each technical plea might be allowed in itself but the accumulation of quibbles forms an overwhelming condemnation. The coalition of parties might have been excused, but the two men who contrived it could not.

"Unless a real good government is the consequence, nothing can justify it to the public," confessed Fitzpatrick. It was a gambler's throw.

In the nine months for which Fox was in power he could not accomplish very much. He tried in vain to league with Prussia and Russia against the House of Bourbon, failing before the impassivity of his should-be allies. He gave what he termed his personal support to Pitt's motion for parliamentary reform, but allowed all the votes to go with North against it. He demanded an establishment for the Prince of Wales which conflicted with the King's own proposals, and had to give way. He conferred a pension on an ex-mistress of the Prince, the famous Mrs. "Perdita" Robinson, for whom he himself had lately shown such an extreme passion as to rouse Horace Walpole's almost contemptuous amazement. He ruined a vast number of humble and respectable persons by sweeping ejectments from a host of offices, non-political, but in the gift of the ministry, in order to introduce political supporters of his own into their places, and thereby roused personal resentment in numerous unconsidered localities. And he came utterly to grief over his sweeping India Bill. His treatment of this grave business seems to have been





CHARLES JAMES FOX

FROM A PAINTING BY K. A. HICKEL





characteristic; on the one hand he assumed that Warren Hastings, the East India Company and all its shareholders and officials were monsters of deepest dye, and that, therefore, the chartered rights and vested interests of these monsters might be disregarded, while on the other hand, arranging on excellent principles a completely new system, it so happened that the immediate practical effect was to lodge in his own hands (the seven commissioners were all party devotees) an immense patronage which, covering the time of the elections to the new parliament, would more than outbalance any royal influence which could be used against him, and thus secure a long and solid tenure of office.

If it can now be thought that this great advantage to the minister involved in his India Bill was a mere accident of dates it was impossible in those days to think so. The device appeared so obvious, and the calm overriding of all the legal rights, by no means obsolete, of the most famous chartered company in history appeared so arbitrary, that the real merits of the remainder of the measure were not examined, and a public, already staggered by the sight of the prophet of Principle eating his own words and embracing a minister whom he had threatened with impeachment, was now excited to extreme indignation. A flood of pamphlets and caricatures exposed the weak side of Fox's scheme, and the once popular hero was burned in effigy by the mob. The votes of the coalition carried the bill, of course, in the Commons; but the King,

aware of the public feeling, used his own influence in the Lords, and got it there defeated, and dismissed his ministers next day. The King's act was as clearly unconstitutional as Fox's, but the public bestowed little criticism, for the King had but executed the general desire; as Fitzpatrick might have said, if the consequences were a real good government it would seem perfectly justified to the public.

The Pitt ministry was the consequence, and the public was thoroughly satisfied.

The great factor which Charles Fox habitually overlooked was the public. He could talk of it, as when he told North, during the American War, that he would have to face the wrath of an indignant people, and face it perhaps on the scaffold. But whatever he might say about the reform of elections or the importance attaching to county petitions, he never really altered his natural Whig assumption of the supreme and sole importance of Parliament. At heart and in practice he was an oligarch.

When people deceive themselves it is usually quite easy for other people to see through the deception, and Fox thundering against the unconstitutional action of the King when his own Reform of India Bill was, it seemed, a gigantic electioneering trick, excited little more than derision. Fox and the Whigs always held that their opponents were bound to "play the game" according to the Whig rules and regulations, and found it a moral and constitutional crime if opponents played by

rules of their own. When they talked of the principles of 1688 they meant the practices of Pelham, and their "constitution" presupposed a foreigner or a statue permanently on the throne. With something of the same scepticism did contemporaries remain less moved than is posterity by Burke's earnest appeals against corruption, or Dunning's scathing indictment of royal influence. The Fox fortune was matter of notoriety, the Burkes were understood to be endowing themselves quite efficiently by help of the India Office, Dunning, two years after his famous motion, had demanded and obtained a peerage, while another eminent member of the Fox and Burke party, Barré, had secured a great sinecure and exposed in the House his demands for "compensation" with cynical effrontery. The reforming Bill, which "the Rockinghams" had finally produced, had saved the paltry sum of £72,000, paltry compared with their sweeping accusations and lofty professions and with the scale of salaries and compensations which they had reserved for themselves. Was this the sincerity and honesty whereof the party had made such boast?

"I have been emptying my [gold fish] pond," writes Walpole, "and in the mud of the troubled water I have found all my gold, as Dunning and Barré did last year."

In spite of Horace Walpole's for once correct presentiment, expressed in July 1783, that various reasons, "and you can guess them," might prevent Mr. Fox from holding power long enough to restore

the credit of the country, he could not suppress his chagrin and wrath when "immaculate Master Billy," as he comforts himself by calling Pitt, proved the truth of his, and other people's, warnings, and grasped and kept the helm of the state. With his usual infelicity of prophecy Walpole had announced at first that "our raw boy of a minister" would last but ten days, as Gibbon had also announced that "Charles's black collier would soon sink Billy's painted galley," but the elections of 1784 revealed so complete a catastrophe that even Walpole's dogged conservatism could not impute to "the industry of the court and the India Company" the universal secession. A momentary frenzy, he says, had seized the whole nation "as if it were a vast animal, such aversion to the Coalition and such a detestation of Mr. Fox . . . that, even where omnipotent gold retains its influence, the elected pass through an ordeal of the most virulent abuse. The great Whig families, the Cavendishes, Rockinghams, Bedfords have lost all credit in their own counties; nay, have been tricked out of seats where the whole property was their own."

It was the *débâcle* of the sacred Whig system, and it was due to Charles Fox.

A new force had, in fact, now made its appearance felt on the political field, in that middle class so long patronized from aristocratic heights. In a sense William Pitt may be called its apotheosis. And what this class demanded in its leaders was practical handling of facts—probity, earnestness,

steadfastness, "a real good government." Walpole was a little puzzled, he owned, by hearing less than formerly of the *King's friends*. The Pittite party, the new Tory party, was absorbing not only a number of the royal supporters but a number, and with every crisis an increasing number, of the Whigs: with the oligarchy disappeared the royal phalanx which had been formed to withstand it. Even the mannerisms of parliamentary speakers betrayed the change in the audience, classical quotation, says Rose (and Wraxall seems to corroborate him), was already, in 1784, going out of fashion, as being unfamiliar to a large part of the members.

"The passions of the vulgar made and kept Mr. Pitt minister," sneers a supercilious Irish confidant and biographer of Fox.

When Fox exploded his quarrel with Shelburne and, refusing to hearken to the overtures brought by Pitt, broke for ever with the latter, he incidentally wrecked the Whig party; what he intended, we are told, was to destroy the royal system of government which had enabled a monarch to thwart the Whigs. He was for founding a new tool factory when the nation, plunged in military and commercial disaster, wanted practical work undertaken with any and every tool at hand. At such a moment to place in the forefront of politics the "constitutional" relations of monarch and cabinet, and, yet worse, the personal relations of party section-leaders, revealed the incorrigible "academic," or the mere egoist.

The national need had found Fox unpractical,

and Pitt, ready to face the responsibility, to use the tools at hand and, above all, to deal quickly and firmly with the immediate crisis, became the accepted chief of the new class and the new party.

Pitt drew most of his assistants from the middle class; he left great powers to the permanent and the "under" officials, but the individuals were efficient; if he bestowed lavish rewards upon subordinates, they were certainly earned; and if royal favour was directed, as usual, to ministerial supporters, these were not merely steady voters, but workers.

The struggle may have been one between the advocates of Principle and Practice, but a sneer at "materialism" or "commercialism" will not settle the question.

Of the details of Fox's long opposition of twenty-two years it is impossible here to speak, but it should be remembered that his preconceived conviction that Pitt must be in the wrong led him not only to oppose every measure, but to accuse the minister of moral turpitude, *e.g.*, of having deliberately arranged the luckless and mismanaged Quiberon expedition in order to betray the French royalists to their enemies! This came well from the man who had sent his henchman, Adair, to St. Petersburg to thwart by intrigue the diplomacy of the British ambassador.<sup>1</sup> Adair's meticulous

<sup>1</sup> A mean personal manœuvre was used. Adair was introduced by the Duchess of Devonshire, Fox's devoted championess, as her friend, to Whitworth, who thereupon presented him at the Russian Court. See Rose, "William Pitt and National Revival," p. 623 ff.



quibbles no more conceal the truth than Sackville's avoidance of verbal lies translated his actual falsehoods into veracity. Fox was probably not diplomatist enough to perceive that his private foiling of Pitt at St. Petersburg helped to ruin the last chances for that cause of Polish liberty which he professed to befriend. He looked only to the personal advantage. He acted in similar underhand fashion towards Pitt's liberal efforts for Ireland in 1785, first organizing opposition in British newspapers, till the Bill was whittled down to suit Scotch and English jealousy, then fomenting Irish resentment to the pitch of rejecting it. Yet he posed as the friend of Ireland. Even Fox's admirers confessed a certain falling off in him after 1782. Grattan said that "no person had heard Mr. Fox to advantage, who had not heard him before the Coalition; or Mr. Pitt, who had not heard him before he quitted office [in 1801]. Each defended himself on these occasions with surprising ability: but each felt that he had done something that required defence: the talent remained, the mouth still spoke great things, but the swell of soul was no more."<sup>1</sup>

Fox knew, better probably than most, that for many years of his premiership Pitt was no supreme First Minister, in the old sense of the term. But it suited his tactics of accumulating personal attack upon Pitt to charge him with having inspired George III with aversion to himself—a charge zealously repeated by Fox's followers. It suited his tactics, again, when Pitt made overtures to him, to

<sup>1</sup> Butler's "Reminiscences," p. 172.

make as preliminary an impossible stipulation—that Pitt should resign—"as a matter of form"—and to treat his natural and necessary refusal as a proof of insincerity. Fox transferred to Pitt the moral indignation he had once hurled upon North, but this time his wrath was avowedly stirred by his own "wrongs," as his followers termed them.

In the same way, when the King's mental breakdown necessitated a Regency Bill, Fox's personal ambition and interests dictated his principle of the prerogative rights of the Prince of Wales, remarkably inconsistent with his former attacks upon the prerogative rights of a King. Consistency is perhaps in itself hardly a virtue, but abrupt changes of principle require the excuse of new light. The only new circumstances in the constitutional position in 1788 were that the Prince would make Fox Prime Minister and that the proposed restrictions on his temporary power would hinder Fox's followers from securing peerages, pensions and permanent sinecures immediately, and they feared to wait lest the King might recover. What Fox and his party asserted, that the restrictions on the Regency were meant to hinder Pitt from losing office, was untrue—they could not have had that effect.

The sudden change of Fox's views upon France from one extreme to its opposite, were, of course, due to the Revolution. When Pitt, in 1786, was completing a commercial treaty with France, extremely advantageous to this country, Fox declaimed against it as an almost treasonable attempt

to make friends with "our natural enemy" and the enemy of liberty. Five years later he was asserting that with the disappearance of the Bourbon monarchy had disappeared all possible danger from France, France was now the champion of Liberty and therefore nothing but Pitt intervened to prevent our friendship with her. In defiance of facts and dates Fox continued to reiterate that the war, forced upon us by the revolutionary government of France, was a war of Pitt's seeking, and to malign him for "making war." "What a friend has Mr. Pitt been to Buonaparte!" exclaims an intimate of Fox; had it not been for Pitt's determination to continue at war (that war which ruined his own political schemes and hopes), the whole of Europe would have been at peace from 1793; such asseverations, demonstrably false, and to the mass of Fox's English contemporaries palpably absurd, became by dint of mere reiteration a part of the Fox creed or myth. After the death of Fox they continued to be repeated by his followers and biographers, and they are still not unfrequently reproduced. Even Fox's admirers had to confess that his speeches were apt to be verbose because he was so much addicted to repetition. The iteration, if it prove the sincerity of Fox's self-deception, proves the incapacity of his party for perceiving facts.

It was not the sincerity of his conviction which his fellow countrymen were concerned about, but its misconception.

Fox's habit of assuming that everything ministerial was not mistaken merely, but wicked, just

as it permitted him to intrigue abroad against the Ministry at home, permitted him also to assume that everyone connected with the Minister and his policy was also in the wrong, that, in short, everything definitely *English* must be bad, and anything foreign and in opposition to England, good, and he was the first to use this kind of assumption as a political weapon. He himself had declared that the disasters to the English armies at Saratoga and Yorktown had given him "great pleasure"; during the Revolution war he told a correspondent that the successes of our foes and the calamities of our own troops gave him more pleasure than, perhaps, was right, "certainly more than it is safe to avow." In the American War, when complaint was heard of the harshness of the Americans to certain prisoners, Fox was sure that it must have been caused by previous cruelty of General Cornwallis to his American prisoners, and then asserts this as if a known fact. During the Peninsular War he caught up at hearsay and propagated as if proved calumnious charges against the British troops. He did not know, says one of his latest critics, that he was propagating a lie, he was "merely . . . the trustful receptacle of anti-British slanders started by foreign chanceries."

It was apparently his notion of generosity to encourage the foreigner by be-fouling his own race. It was in the name of Justice to a distant people that Fox led the way in the six years' persecution of Warren Hastings; and thereby at all events wreaked his vengeance on one of the pro-

tagonists in the fight over the fatal India Bill. It is often forgotten that Hastings was pronounced innocent, it should not be forgotten that he was deliberately ruined in health and fortune by the persistent combination of his Whig prosecutors, a conspiracy of persecution of whom Fox, the champion of Liberty and Justice, was foremost.

It was but in keeping with Fox's anti-national attitude, whether real or assumed, that he hurried to France the moment that Addington's Peace of Amiens made it possible to do so, and allowed himself to be publicly received as the English friend of France, together with Irish and other revolutionary propagandists. He scorned, says his adulatory biographer, the base imputations which would arise from his keeping such company, and besides, he was but a private individual, and could have no responsibility.

It may be worth noting that Fox had for years been the political friend and chief of an Irish party, the more extreme members of which were already dabbling in professions of disloyalty, and perhaps it may be thought that he had caught up from them some of that superinduced aversion for mere Englishry which has on other occasions appeared to be of a contagious nature. Fitzpatrick, Barré, Burke, Sheridan, Moira, Tierney, and Hare were all Irish, so were Fox's uncles, Conolly and the Duke of Leinster. There seems, at any rate, something of what is often called Irish reasoning in the Whig contention that, as Fox was not in power during the Revolution war, it is fair to assume

that, had he been so, there would have been neither war nor taxes. His early admirers calmly state this as an indubitable fact.

Without maintaining that either the policy or the methods of "the pilot who weathered the storm" were invariably wise, it may be permissible to doubt whether the man whose misjudgements, in 1782, of Catharine of Russia and Frederick II, were only matched by his misconceptions of the Revolution, of Philippe Egalité and of Napoleon, could have weathered the storm at all. He termed Napoleon "a young man intoxicated by success," and this in 1802! At all events, his own generation were not willing to trust for safety to his generous principles. Did not the very terrors of the French Revolution, they asked, demonstrate the incalculable dangers attendant upon unrestrained enthusiasm and unbalanced oratory?

In the foreshortening which time necessarily imposes upon our view of the past it has become usual to pass but lightly over Fox's dissolute "early life" and his close connection with the Prince of Wales. But to do this is to ignore circumstances which went far to determine the attitude of his fellow countrymen towards him. That "early life" of devotion to wine, women, and play lasted certainly until he was about forty, perhaps rather longer. And that connection with the Prince of Wales, known to London and England by the time he was thirty for a callous and spendthrift debauchee, was quite clearly as much a political as a personal friend-



ship. The strenuous endeavours of Fox and his small party to procure a very great income for the Prince, to place him in complete royal authority during his father's incapacity, as well as the plain lie told to Parliament about the Prince's connection with Mrs. Fitzherbert, proved the reliance which Fox had upon the political influence of the Prince of Wales. It was little else but absurd for Fox to be indignant at the suspicions which Pitt, he said, appeared to entertain of the Prince, when all London knew the facts to which the Ministers, even in self-justification, could not in decency allude in the House. And if Fox was really deceived by the Prince, when he denied the marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert—and no one suggests the contrary—he must surely have been strangely gullible, more ready to be deceived than was creditable either to a statesman or an intimate of the Prince.

His own life had not afforded much ground for supposing that he would be scrupulous in personal matters. Eight years seem to have elapsed before he repaid Carlisle the great sum the Earl had forfeited on his behalf. "But I wish he would pay Lord Carlisle," Walpole keeps muttering. His effects had again been distrained in 1785. Apparently the gradual process of reformation stated to have set in about 1782, when the youth was thirty-three, and was head over heels in love with Mrs. Robinson, was very gradual. His generous friends collected a great subscription for him, and invested it in an annuity, to put it out of his power to squander the principal. His brief passion for Mrs. Robinson



having subsided, he formed in 1785 a close intimacy with Mrs. Armistead, also a woman of a certain notoriety. She was possessed of a pleasant country estate, St. Ann's Hill, and there with her Fox henceforth made his home. After ten years (when Fox was forty-six) he married her, but *secretly*; that is to say he did not give her an honourable position until in 1802, four years before his death, he at length acknowledged the fact.

The quiet domestic life which he was content to lead with her is, we are told, much to be admired. It proves, at any rate, that when debauchery had palled he could enjoy quiet comforts. The same could be said of any number of titled or royal reprobates. Neither is there anything very extraordinary in Fox's constant affection for the best literature. Some of his biographers seem to suggest that a fondness, which he shared with many contemporaries, for reading Homer, Virgil, and Horace, or the great Italian poets, the friends of school and college days, was an almost moral merit which proves a man of a soul above all passions or frailties. That Fox, in middle age and failing health, lived contentedly upon slender means—including a very comfortable country house, an assured income and every convenience for foreign travel, is held to prove his sublime superiority to ambition: he is a modern Cincinnatus who relinquished ambition when it was too late to hope for success.

The fact appears to be that the political legend of Charles Fox has been very largely based upon the tradition of his personal charm. There is an

almost general consensus of critical opinion against the wisdom of his state-craft during the Revolution war; historical judgement as a rule endorses on the whole the view of Pitt and Wyndham and Burke and Grenville. The generosity, the fascinating conversation, openness and good humour of Charles Fox have captivated the Whig recollection, and sentiment is to bias judgement. That Fox was usually wrong in forecast and in tactics is not to be reckoned against him any more than his dissolute life: he was always charming. Eternal Youth may be delightful as a companion, but a Peter Pan in politics is not practicable. "*Il ne mûrira jamais!*" was Madame du Deffand's condemnation. Excuses are claimed, and certainly made, on all hands, for the kind heart and brilliant genius of an ill-trained boy, the spoiled child of a conscienceless millionaire, the popular leader of reckless fashionables, universally adored and tempted, yet never so far ruined as to be unable to turn to soberer paths in private life at middle age. Constant apologetic seems no strong testimonial to a statesman.

Was he a statesman at all? Was he not in political life, too, an egoist of winning manner and of a few poetical dreams, intent on place and possessed to an almost monomaniac degree by hatred of those who would not surrender their posts to him; his one principle, that Pitt must be wrong; his deduction, that all Pitt's foes, French, Russian, Irish, must be right; his attitude, like a true Whig, towards expressions of national or popular feeling one of total disregard?

In the historical imagination Charles Fox will always hold his place, the central place in a picturesque and artificial world, in the operatic atmosphere of the age of rapiers and ruffles and stage-coaches, where vice behaves as a fine gentleman and folly is cloaked in sentiment and dignity, the world of the beaux, the wits, and the Great Whigs. Indeed, even in his own day Walpole declared him "the type, the archetype of the century," and popular wit acclaimed his likeness to the favourite hero of a famous comedy :

"I won't sell Uncle Noll," Charles Surface cries,  
 "I won't sell Charley Fox," John Bull replies.

But over the brilliant, superficial society satirized by Sheridan the limelight is always at play, while that new party—dubbed "Tory" by the Whig oligarchs—largely middle-class in essence, intensely patriotic, and before all things practical, dwelt, rather, in the open air among prosaic daily facts, and it accepted Pitt and rejected Fox. And we, the ultimate spectators of the glittering pageant of the eighteenth century, should beware lest we set purely artistic appreciation in the room of honest historical judgement.

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